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Monster Hunting Made Easy

d20 Modern's Department-7 Handbook

Necromancer's "Wilderlands" Reviewed

RPGA Update · Global Positioning

Polyhedron 166

First Watch

Previews, notes & news on the world of d20 gaming

Release Roundup

With the birth of the d20 System, adventures were all the rage. Once small publishers discovered how difficult it was to turn a profit on short quests, they shifted to giant sourcebooks based around existing and new core and prestige classes. Then we were buried under a tsunami of monster encyclopedias. Finally, the industry has latched onto the idea of campaign settings, and currently available releases make up one of the greatest influxes of campaign setting creativity seen since the heyday of TSR. We'll get around to looking at many of these settings here in the pages of *Polyhedron*, but it seems fitting to start with the setting that's been around longer than most of our staff has been alive.

Illustration by Rey Lewis

Player's Guide to the Wilderlands (Necromancer Games/Sword & Sorcery Studios)

Authors: Bob Bledsaw, Clark Peterson, James Mishler, Rob Conley, Greg Geilman, and Patrick Lawinger
Format: 128 black-and-white pages, perfect bound, full-color poster map
Price: $23.95

The d20 System era isn't the first time we've seen second-party companies publishing Dungeons & Dragons-compatible products. Way back in the late 1970s, D&D was so popular that TSR had trouble keeping up with demand. Enter Judges Guild, a small publishing outfit with an official license to produce D&D-friendly adventures, accessories, and supplements. Judges Guild published the game's first city supplement, the first outdor encounter tables, the first DM's screen, and blazed new trails with innovative (for the time) rules like critical hits, weapon speeds, and reach. Their most famous release, an urban setting called the *City State of the Invincible Overlord*, remained in print into the 1980s, and reappeared under license from Mayfair Games several years later.

Like most Judges Guild products, the *City State* was based in a fantasy campaign setting called the Wilderlands, an enormous world that grew with each new Judges Guild release. While many modern gamers have never heard of the Wilderlands, it was one of the very first fantasy settings, and influenced the first generation of fantasy roleplaying gamers.

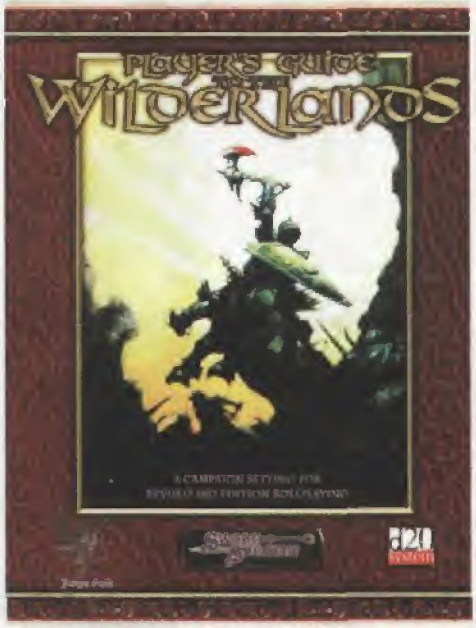
One of those early gamers was Clark Peterson, who one day would become president of Necromancer Games. Necromancer, one of the first d20 publishers, bills itself as providing "3rd Edition Rules, 1st Edition Feel," appealing to old school gamers who remember the glory days of the D&D game, when orcs were meant to be killed and story took prescedence over rules. Clark fondly remembered the Wilderlands campaign setting, and (with the blessing and cooperation of Judges Guild creator Bob Bledsaw) managed to get the license to produce new Judges Guild material for the d20 System.

The first offering from Necromancer's Judges Guild imprint, the *Players Guide to the Wilderlands*, manages to perfectly fit the spirit of the game's earliest days, providing a glimpse into a fantastic world of high adventure that's a little bit grittier while at the same time a lot more imaginative than many modern campaign settings. The book speaks seductively to those of us who like our fantasy in the vein of Robert Howard and Jack Vance, urging us to cast aside the glossy, full-color setting books we've grown to love and engage in a torrid affair with one of the oldest settings known to gaming.

But part of that "1st Edition Feel" is putting the rules second to story, and in this vein, the *Player's Guide to the Wilderlands* is very much a product of its enthusiastic, but not particularly balanced, inspiration.

Into the Wilderlands

The Wilderlands contain a dizzying array of possible campaign locales, from the caveman- and mastodon-dominated Elphand Lands to the dragon-infested Valley of the Ancients to the nomad highlands of Altanis. Pirates, barbarians, and wild beasts are everywhere, with safe refuge found only within arrow range of several great city states: Viridistan (City State of the World Emperor), Tula (City of Mages), Rallu (City State of the Sea Kings), and the eponymous City State of the Invincible Overlord.



Each city or wilderness locale offers a specific type of roleplaying experience. In Tula, even the average citizen is likely to know a handful of spells, and magical beasts, demons, and worse walk the city streets. In Viridistan, a green-skinned immortal human sits upon an imperial throne, strengthening the influence of his domain with demonic magic. You won't find a lot of cozy halfling communities in the Wilderlands, but you'll find plenty of overcrowded, disease-choked cities, deadly mountain passes, and treacherous oceans. The book itself is heavy on history but light on modern detail. It's probably most similar to Wizards of the Coast's *Living Greyhawk Gazetteer*, in that the focus is on story over rules, so a player of 1st Edition D&D might find the book every bit as useful as the greenest 3rd Edition newbie.

Unlike the *Living Greyhawk Gazetteer*, however, the *Player's Guide to the Wilderlands* contains a number of new rules, from attribute bonuses for human subraces to new feats to new monsters and classes. And no matter how much I like the setting's background, these rules present a lot of problems.

In the Wilderlands, not all humans are created equal. The book contains thirteen subraces of humanity, each of which differs in appearance and, more importantly, in game terms. Ghinorans conform to the standards outlined in the *Player's Handbook*, but Karakhans get Ride and Handle Animal as class skills, a +1 bonus on all Ride checks, and a free Mounted Warrior feat. Altanians get an even better deal, with +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, −2 Intelligence, −2 Charisma, a free Track feat, three bonus class skills, and a +2 racial bonus on Survival checks ("balanced" by losing the normal human's minor skill point advantage). Worst of all is the Amazon, which gets +2 Wisdom and Charisma, a +1 psionic bonus to AC, and two class skills. These advantages are "balanced" by the fact that they can't wear armor (which shouldn't trouble an Amazon sorcerer, who ought to appreciate that Charisma bonus). If you're the kind of player who wants all base races to be more or less equal, you're going to want to do a fair amount of tinkering with this book.

And you're not going to want to use any of the new classes (alchemist, Amazon warrior, sage, and witch). The alchemist is absolutely great in terms of flavor, but falls flat when it comes to power. The class seems to hover between NPC and PC status, not quite as good as a wizard, but better than an adept. Worse, almost all of the alchemist's class abilities cost experience points, so in order to do anything fun, the alchemist is going to be treading water while his companion wizards and sorcerers hog the spotlight by advancing in level and actually making an impact on the game.

The sage is probably the book's play balance lowpoint. To quote the example of the sage's research ability, the cornerstone of the class: "For example, if a sage wishes to gain the maximum +3 bonus on a DC 30 Knowledge skill check, he must spend 120 hours—or 12 full days—in study (DC 20 × 2 = 40 hours per +1, × 3 for +3 = 120 hours." Alternately, a character could ask two 1st-level followers with 1 rank in the Knowledge skill to "aid another" on the exact same check, garnering a +4 bonus and saving 71,999 rounds (to say nothing of the 100,000 gp the sage spent on his library).

The further the book's game rules wander from trying to reinvent the wheel (or the core classes and races, for that matter), the better they are. A great sidebar on "Tomes of Knowledge" includes rules for going mad after reading fell ancient librams, something I plan to adapt into my campaign immediately. A subsection of the book's extensive history section breaks the history of the Wilderlands into several categories, presenting bardic knowledge DCs for knowing information regarding each, something I consider a real innovation that I'd like to see carried through in all campaign setting products. Libram titles like the *White Book of Mazzaroth* and the *Plane of Molten Skies* further enhance the setting's pulpy roots.

The book also contains an optional slow xp progression chart sure to find devotees among fans of older editions, who often feel that 3rd Edition speeds through levels too fast.

Despite all my carping on rules balance, I really like this product. The fact of the matter is that the *Player's Guide to the Wilderlands* is a campaign setting first and a rulebook second. Everyone who buys this thing will already have a solid set of rules in the core books, so the fact that the book's mechanics need some work shouldn't deter would-be purchasers from picking up a really great setting.—Erik Mona

Sorry, Warduke Not Allowed

As I sat thinking about updates for this issue's installment of "News from the Top," I was flicking through issue #105 of *Dungeon*, which had just hit my desk. I smiled bemusedly as I read and related to Erik's editorial on Warduke, the "coolest" "all-star" plastic action figure he used as a child to terrorize the planet Hoth and to destroy his mother's houseplants. This wasn't a smile of someone amused at Erik's story, but one of total connection, though for a differing reason. I was thinking of the pounds of unpainted metal I still owned—boxes of unpainted, unfinished models that have been shipped around the world to still grace the bottom of my closet in the vain hope that one day I'd find time to assemble and paint them.

With the introduction of the new painted plastic D&D Miniatures line, my enthusiasm was rekindled (sadly at the cost of consigning those pounds of unfinished—yet still loved—miniatures to languish within the dark recesses of my closet for the foreseeable future).

As we put the finishing touches to the new RPGA Miniatures tournament and league floor rules, my workspace has been rapidly overtaken by warbands for good and evil as well as law and chaos. Our new Miniatures tournaments were first showcased under the RPGA banner at Gen Con SoCal 2003, with the highlight being the Dragoneye prerelease tournament. This was a full two weeks prior to the official launch of the second set of D&D Miniatures, and just one of a number of RPGA Miniatures events we had planned for the show. Sadly, cherished Warduke wasn't present, as he and his action figure friends aren't legal (I'm sure Erik will find a new "coolest" miniature to substitute for him and battle with in the future).

Full sanctioning instructions for all enthusiasts, like myself, are available at rpga.com, and we've even expanded the site to create a retailer kit for your local store!

I Can Now Play at My Local Store?

This kit, available at the beginning of January, 2004, contains full instructions on how your local store can host D&D Miniatures leagues and tournaments. Every month, we'll update the kit with copies of a special RPGA adventure. These sanctioned RPGA adventures will help give players, new and old, a chance to sample the high adventure we have all come to love within our community.

This package is only available from the RPGA via Wizards of the Coast's Direct Sales department, so if you'd like your store to participate, suggest they call 1-800-564-1636.

As with established RPGA-sanctioned games, all reporting will be via the Internet for both D&D Miniatures play and retailer RPG gaming.

The D&D Miniatures leagues and tournaments are open to all players, experienced or not. For now, the adventures will be from the *Legacy of the Green Regent* campaign, and later from the forthcoming Eberron campaign setting. These adventures will also be available from our online ordering, so for those with no local store, fear not, you'll still be able to get them and face the challenges within those hallowed pages.

Time to Reward GMs

It's a new year, so it's time to reward those who gave us so many great games in 2003. Therefore, from January we will be rewarding GMs much like we do players for reported RPGA game play. Those GMs who were in the old system will be receiving a special gift(s) to thank them for their service and welcome them to the new program. During January, these will be speeding to all GMs who signed up online at rpga.com before the end of December, 2003. From then on, rewards for play and GMing will be simultaneously mailed three times a year. It's about time we rewarded those who make our weekly RPGA game nights so exciting. With the D&D Player Rewards program becoming so successful in 2003, it makes perfect sense to expand this now. Check out rpga.com for more details and to sign up if you haven't already.

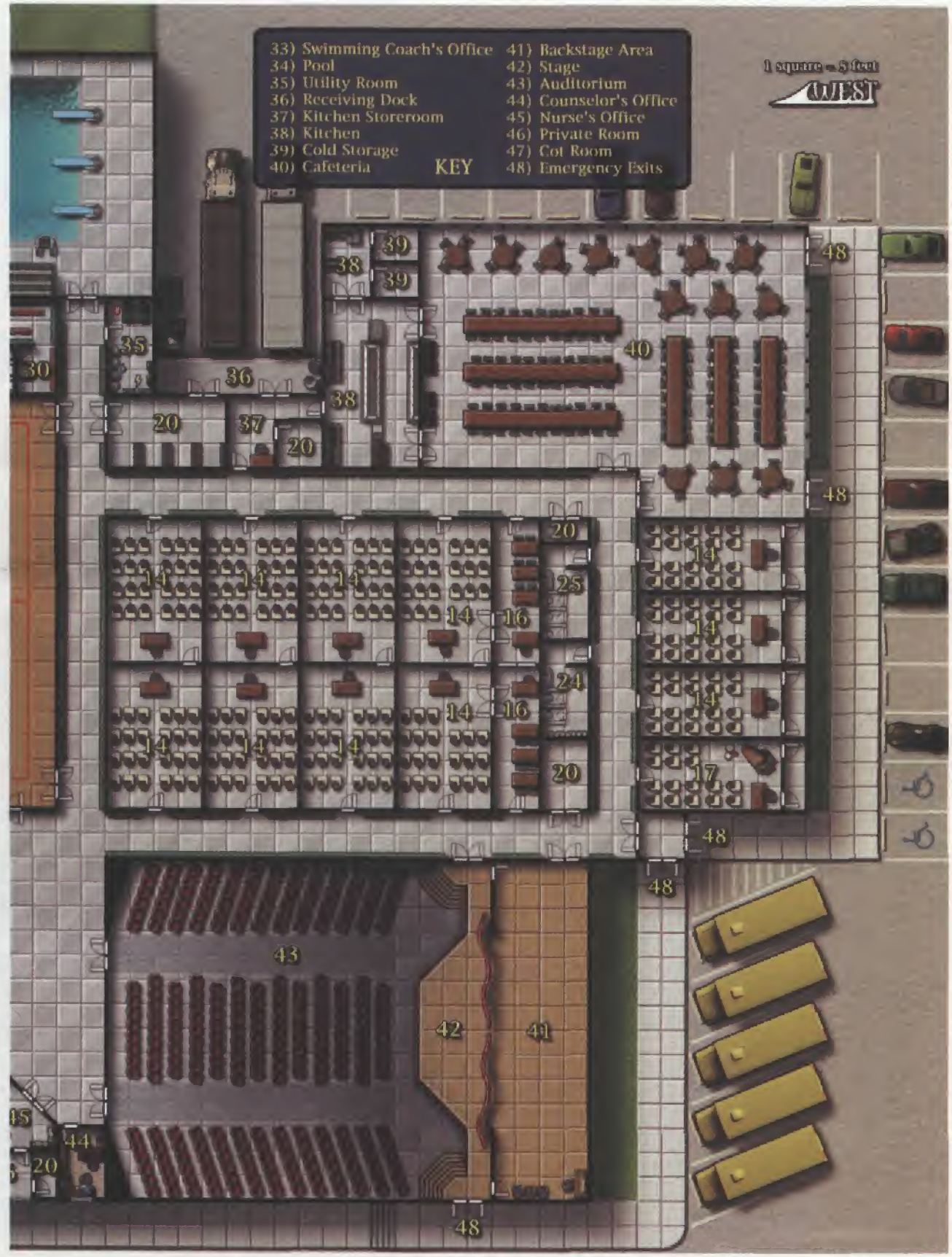
And Finally...

Winter Fantasy 2004 is just around the corner, and we need a few last-minute GMs. If you're thinking of joining us at the Meadowlands Exposition Center, New Jersey and would like to help us out, we'd love to hear from you at rpgagm@wizards.com. More details and reward outlines are available at rpga.com.

Until next time, may the goddess Tymora shine favorably upon your d20s everywhere... I know my warband of hapless ogres could do with a little luck.

Ian Richards
Worldwide RPGA Director
ianr@wizards.com


Public High School
KEY
1) Main Entrance
2) Lobby
3) Display Case
4) File Room
5) Main Office
6) Conference Room
7) Principal's Office
8) Vice Principal's Office
9) Library
10) Raised Study Area (Over AV Rooms)
11) Librarian's Office
12) Library Assistants' Desk
13) Computer Lab
14) Classrooms
15) Industrial Arts Classroom
16) Science Labs
17) Music Classroom
18) Art Classroom
19) Darkroom
20) Storage Room
21) Home Economics Classroom
22) Teachers' Lounge
23) Lecture Hall
24) Men's Room
25) Ladies' Room
26) Gymnasium
27) Bleachers
28) Boys' Locker Room
29) Girls' Locker Room
30) Showers
31) Cleaning Supply Room
32) Coach's Office


33) Swimming Coach's Office
34) Pool
35) Utility Room
36) Receiving Dock
37) Kitchen Storeroom
38) Kitchen
39) Cold Storage
40) Cafeteria
KEY
41) Backstage Area
42) Stage
43) Auditorium
44) Counselor's Office
45) Nurse's Office
46) Private Room
47) Cot Room
48) Emergency Exits
1 square = 5 feet
WEST

DEAD MAN'S ‡ QUEST ‡

An Adventure in Freeport

By Graeme Davis Art by James Ryman

Farewell and adieu to ye noble hearties,
Farewell and adieu to ye ladies of Spain,
I've received my orders for to sail for the Dead Man,
And I hope with the Grand Fleet to see you again.
—"Tom Deadlight" (traditional)

Living pirates are a common enough hazard around the islands known as the Serpent's Teeth. A dead one is even more trouble—especially when his treasure has been stolen.

"Dead Man's Quest" is a D&D adventure for four 1st-level characters. Since a substantial part of the adventure takes place at sea or underwater, at least some of the player characters should have ranks in Profession (sailor) and Swim. The DM should familiarize himself with the section on aquatic terrain in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* on pages 92–93 and the section on water dangers on page 304 before running the adventure.

This adventure serves as an introduction to Green Ronin's Freeport campaign setting. It takes the PCs to this infamous pirate city and introduces them to various locations and characters there. Characters who successfully complete this adventure should be of sufficient level to tackle the award-winning Freeport trilogy, *Death in Freeport*, *Terror in Freeport*, and *Madness in Freeport*. Green Ronin publishes several other volumes using the Freeport setting that can further aid in running a Freeport-based campaign.

Adventure Background

Captain Edmund Fletcher was a renowned Freeport pirate and a devout follower of the Pirate God, whose temple is a prominent landmark in the notorious city. While returning home after a raid, Fletcher's ship, the *Stingray*, ran afoul of a small band of sahuagin led by a particularly cruel malenti (a freakish sahuagin that looks almost like an aquatic elf) named Mother Merrow. The *Stingray* sank with the loss of all hands, and in the wreck the sahuagin found the Eye of the Sea Dragon—a priceless gem that Captain Fletcher had recently recovered and had sworn to return to the treasury of the Pirate God's temple in Freeport.

With his vow unfulfilled, Captain Fletcher's spirit has been unable to rest and has become a ghost. His anguish can only be brought to an end if the stolen gem is recovered and brought to the temple.

Adventure Synopsis

The adventure starts when the PCs' ship is attacked by a band of insane pirates. After the encounter, they are approached by the ghost of Captain Fletcher. He asks the PCs to find the wreck of his ship and to recover his body. The wrecked ship lies just off the coast of a small volcanic island that also serves as a hideout for the sahuagin who sank the ship. The PCs must locate this lair and defeat the sahuagin and Mother Merrow in order to recover the Eye of the Sea Dragon.

Having recovered the rare jewel, the PCs' problems are only beginning. They must make their way through dangerous and pirate-infested waters to the notorious pirate city of Freeport before they can bring the gem to the temple of the Pirate God. Unfortunately, nearly as soon as they deliver it, the Eye of the Sea Dragon is stolen from the temple by a group of cultists who intend to use it in a ritual honoring their dark god, a being known only as the Unspeakable One. The PCs must track them to their lair before the ritual can be completed and recover the gem a second time.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure starts with the PCs on the high seas. Exactly how they get there is up to the DM, as a great deal depends upon where they are starting from and what adventures have come their way so far.

Newly-created characters can start their adventuring careers aboard the ship, with only a basic story of where they all come from, where they are going to, and why. Freeport's notoriety is widespread, so it could be that they are all headed there to seek their fortunes. Alternatively, they might be on their way somewhere else, and find themselves sidetracked by this adventure. Here are a few possibilities:

- The PCs have been sent on a diplomatic mission to another nation along with their patron, a 3rd-level aristocrat. The patron dies in an accident or of sickness before the PCs reach their goal, and they find themselves at sea with no goals and no obligations.
- One or more PCs lost property or loved ones in a recent pirate raid. Along with a ragtag band of sur-

vivors, they set out in a patched-up ship to track down the villains responsible, recover their kidnapped families, and bring the pirates to justice. These pirates could be the insane thugs encountered at the start of the adventure, or some other group of pirates that now lurks in Freeport.

- The PCs recently fell foul of the Pirate God, either by having a hand in the sinking a pirate ship by some underhanded means rather than in a fair fight, or by refusing the last request of a dying sea-dog. Worst of all, they may have stolen pirate treasure. Even if the treasure belonged to the PCs before the pirates took it, the Pirate God is offended. The exact nature of the divine curse should be tailored to your campaign, but the PCs should learn from a seer or fortune teller that the only way to lift the curse is to seek out Captain Fletcher of the *Stingray*. The PCs can learn that Captain Fletcher was recently lost at sea; traveling to the region he was last known to be brings them into contact with his ghost.

Pirates! (EL 2)

The sun has just set, but the sea has been wreathed in a thick bank of fog for at least an hour already. The sails of your ship hang empty in the still air, and a layer of moisture coats every exposed surface. Even the constant creaking of the ship's timbers seems quieter than normal.

And then the fog parts, revealing a badly listing ship, its sails burnt and its decks empty and blood-stained, adrift only a few hundred feet ahead of your ship. You can just make out the name of the ship in the last flicker of sunlight: the Brinewolf.

A character who makes a successful Knowledge (local) check (DC 20) recognizes the ship as a known pirate ship captained by one Captain Pigeye Pete. The ship's crew has a reputation for being rather sadistic, but it's been missing (and presumed lost at sea) for nearly a month.

The crew of the *Brinewolf* mutinied several weeks ago, and the resulting battle was quite terrible and bloody. When it became obvious that the ship was lost, the captain burnt the sails and scuttled the ship's food supplies before he was killed. The mutineers barely took the ship, and although more than a dozen of them survived, many were gravely wounded. One of the wounded was the ship's navigator, and without food none of the wounded lasted for long. Since the mutiny, the pirates have been adrift for nearly a month, alternately rowing aimlessly for shore and bickering with increasing violence. Cannibalism kept their bodies alive this long, but their minds have been dead for weeks.

Creatures: *The Brinewolf* is currently crewed by only six human warriors, all of whom are starving and quite insane. Although mad, the pirates remain cunning, and when they saw the PCs ship through the parting fog, they all quickly hid on deck. Characters can make Spot checks against the pirates' Hide checks, but keep in mind that at two hundred feet, there's a –20 penalty on Spot checks.

Pirates, Male Human Warr (6): CR 1/3; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d8+1; hp 6 (each pirate currently has 3 nonlethal damage); Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 11, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +1 melee (1d6/18–20, rapier); SA —; SQ —; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will –2; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 7, Cha 12.

Skills: Jump +4, Profession (sailor) +3, Swim +4.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (profession [sailor]).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Rapier, padded armor, 2d6 cp.

Tactics: The crew of the *Brinewolf* has no ranged weapons, and hopes the PCs' ship approaches and attempts to board them. They wait until the last possible moment, then leap up and onto the PCs' ship, trying to kill everyone on board. If the PCs avoid the *Brinewolf*, the pirates emerge and take up their oars in an attempt to get close enough to board the ship. The easiest way to determine if the pirates catch up to the PCs is to have both groups make opposed Profession (sailor) checks. One pirate makes this check, and the other five aid him (see pages 66–67 of the *Player's Handbook*). If the PCs can win four of these opposed skill checks in a row, they escape the *Brinewolf*. If the pirates win four checks in a row, they catch up and can try to board the PCs' ship. The *Arms and Equipment Guide* has extensive rules for vehicular combat; if you use these rules, the *Brinewolf* is a keelboat.

Once the pirates manage to board the PCs' ship (doing so requires a successful Balance check (DC 12); if the ships are more than a few feet apart it also requires a successful Jump check) they attack with a blind rage. Fortunately for the PCs, the pirates are insane with hunger and fury and fight in an uncoordinated manner as a result. They don't bother flanking characters, and tend to attack random targets.

Treasure: Aside from the meager copper coins and gear carried by the pirates themselves, there is no treasure on board the *Brinewolf*; Captain Pigeye was quick to scuttle the treasure along with the food when the mutiny occurred. The *Brinewolf* itself is barely seaworthy, and if salvaged, is worth only 500 gp.

Development: This encounter assumes that the PCs are alone on their ship; if there are other crewmembers present, you should increase the number of pirates proportionally to keep the battle exciting. The PCs should face about six pirates total during this combat, and the outcome of the battle should be based entirely on how the PCs fare against these pirates; you don't need to actually roll dice for pirates fighting NPCs, but you should make sure to describe these other fights as well during the PCs' and pirates' actions in combat.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: Experience for defeating these pirates should be computed as if they were CR 1/3 creatures since they have some nonlethal damage and don't fight in an organized manner.

Captain Fletcher (EL 6)

As soon as the PCs defeat the pirates (or as soon as they escape from them), read the following.

> Over the sound of the wind and the waves, you can just make out something else—a distant moaning, like someone in great pain. It seems to be getting closer.

Any character on deck that makes a successful Spot check (DC 15) notices a faint light in the distance. The light approaches their vessel steadily, and continues to follow even if they change course. After a few minutes, observers can make out something that looks like a human figure, glowing slightly as it seems to walk along the surface of the sea. No matter what the PCs do, the shape keeps getting closer.

Eventually, the figure reaches their ship and rises up through the hull to float an inch above the deck. This is the Ghost of Captain Fletcher. Doffing his hat with a courtly bow, the figure speaks:

> "A good evenin' to you all, me friends. Ned Fletcher's th'name, late master o' the Stingray, now lost in waters not far from here. We ran afoul o' some fish-men a few days back, which is why you see me in my present unhappy condition.
>
> "I'll come straight to th'point, me friends. See, the *Stingray* were carryin' a great treasure when she were sunk, includin' a precious gem known as th'Eye o'the Sea Dragon, which were promised to th'Temple o'the Pirate God in Freeport. Until that promise be carried out, I be bound t'wander these seas in this pitiable state. So I be needin' yer help in recoverin' th'stone and seein' it safe to Freeport. The rest o' the cargo be yours t'take, in thanks for yer kind assistance. What say ye?"

Creature: Captain Fletcher is dressed in knee-length boots, satin britches, a lace-fronted shirt, a red brocade coat, and a three-cornered hat topped by a bright blue feather. An amulet bearing the sign of the Pirate God hangs around his neck. Curly black hair spills from beneath his hat, and he has a bristling black beard. He has a booming voice, and sprinkles his conversation with nautical terms. He seems slightly transparent, and sometimes glows with a soft blue light (equivalent to torchlight); when he gets angry, this light changes to a fiery red.

Captain Fletcher first noticed the *Brinewolf* and thought to recruit them to aid in his mission, but when the PCs defeated (or avoided) them he realized that they would make better living agents than a boatfull of lunatics.

Captain Ned Fletcher, Male Human Ghost Exp5: CR 6; Medium undead (augmented humanoid, incorporeal); HD 5d12; hp 40; Init +1; Speed fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 14 (+1 Dex, +3 deflection), touch 14, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +3; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee

(1d3, unarmed attack, ethereal opponents only); SA manifestation, *mage hand*; SQ +4 turn resistance, darkvision 60 ft., incorporeal traits, rejuvenation, undead traits, wandering spirit; AL CN; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 13, Con —, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 17.

***Mage Hand* (Su):** Captain Fletcher can use *mage hand* at will as a standard action (caster level 12th).

Wandering Spirit (Ex): Unlike most ghosts, Captain Fletcher's love of exploration and travel allows his ghost to travel at will; he is not bound to the site of his death.

Skills: Appraise +10, Balance +9, Bluff +13, Climb +9 (+11 with ropes), Diplomacy +5, Disguise +3 (+5 acting), Escape Artist +1 (+3 with ropes), Gather Information +5, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (local) +10, Profession (sailor) +10, Swim +9, Use Rope +9.

Feats: Iron Will, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Intimidate).

Languages: Common, Aquan, Orc.

Possessions: None; Captain Fletcher's possessions were taken from his body by the sahuagin. If any of these items are returned to his body, he gains ethereal copies of them.

Development: Captain Fletcher is a gift for DMs who like to overact, and he should be played to the full. He lacks most of the more aggressive ghostly powers, which makes it difficult for him to recover the Eye of the Sea Dragon himself, and forces him to count on the PCs for help. He relies heavily upon his Bluff and Intimidate skills to get his way.

If the PCs refuse to help Captain Fletcher, he continues to haunt them until they give in. His howling and wailing keep anyone from relaxing, and he tends to manifest himself at the most inconvenient moments. His sudden appearances can cause –2 penalties on skill checks or attack rolls. He uses his *mage hand* power to create harmless but annoying pranks at the PCs' expense. Even if the PCs manage to destroy him, his rejuvenation ability allows him to restore himself in 2d4 days if he makes a successful level check (DC 16), at which point he reappears near the character who slew him and renews his haunting.

Here are a few quotes that the DM can use when Captain Fletcher is tormenting the PCs:

"That weren't a friendly way to treat a shipmate who's, down on his luck, now was it? Just remember, one day ye'll be in need of a helpin' hand yerselves."

"See, I wouldn't a' done it that way if I'd a' been ye."

"BOO! Ha, ha, ha—you shoulda seen yerself! Jumped right outta yer skin, ye did!"

"I heard that! It be bad luck to speak ill o'th'dead, y'know. Not to mention tis a grave discourtesy to a hapless shipmate."

"Simple enough to be rid o' me if'n that's what ye wants."

The Sunken Stingray

The *Stingray* lies in thirty feet of water, a dozen or so miles from the point where the PCs first encountered Captain Fletcher and not far from the shores of an apparently uninhabited volcanic island. Given a favorable wind and calm seas, they can reach the site fairly quickly by following Captain Fletcher's directions.

> A rugged, jungle-covered island juts starkly from the sea here. A low volcano dominates the isle, and wisps of smoke waft from its crater. There seems to be no beach or other safe landings along the edge of the isle, its basalt cliffs rising nearly a hundred feet from the breakers below. A treacherous-looking reef shields the southeastern shores of the island from easy approach.

Captain Fletcher guides the PCs towards the reef on the southeast side of the isle. If the PCs' ship is large, he recommends that they take a rowboat over to the wrecked *Stingray*. The water itself is crystal clear, and as the PCs draw near they can see no less than four wrecked ships impaled on the reefs below. One ship is obviously in better condition than the others; this is the *Stingray*. As they draw near, Captain Fletcher speaks up.

> As the wreck of the *Stingray* comes into view, Captain Fletcher wipes a transparent tear from his cheek.
>
> "Never had a chance," he says sadly. "They just crept up and holed 'er 'neath th'waterline, and it were sink or swim. No warnin' or nothin'. All me brave lads, rest their souls...them as didn't drown was picked off in the water as they tried t'get away." He stares sadly down upon the waves for a moment, and then shakes himself.
>
> "Well, there be no help fer that now. We best be getting t'business. Thar be a stash o'potions in me quarters below that grant th'power t'breathe water. Alas, I be in no shape to be fetching them up for ye. I'll spy out the land down below, and ye busy yerselves contriving some means t'reach the ship. If ye can reach me quarters, look behind the chart fer the potions." With that, he sinks down through the deck of the ship and into the sea below.

No matter how long the PCs may wait for him, Captain Fletcher does not return, for he has found his body in the deep below and has been overcome with grief.

The greatest challenge facing the PCs in this part of the adventure is how to survive underwater long enough to reach the wreck and search it. If they can get to the captain's cabin (area S4), they may be able to secure the potions of *water breathing* from the hidden compartment in the wall. Otherwise, they'll be forced to make multiple dives.

A character with a good Swim skill should be able to dive to the wreck without too much trouble, but can only stay down for a limited time. The water on the surface is rough, but underwater the currents are sheltered by the reefs and the water becomes calm.

The Stingray

The *Stingray* is remarkably undamaged, since, as Fletcher explained, the attacking sahuagin simply holed the ship and waited for it to sink. The crew tried desperately to make for landfall, but the ship sank before it reached the island and the crew were picked off in the water as they abandoned ship.

The wreck sits almost upright on the sea floor, about 30 feet down. The gun deck is about 20 feet down, and the upper deck is only 10 feet down. The afterdeck (area S2) is only a few feet underwater. Her masts are intact, but her sails and rigging are gone; the tips of the masts protrude from the waves. These are the depths at low tide; at high tide, add 5 feet to each depth.

There are several more wrecks in the immediate area, all of which seem to have been sunk in the same way as the *Stingray*. They have obviously been on the bottom longer, though: the marine sediment on their

decks is thicker, and in some places coral and various plants now grow. These wrecks contain nothing of value; the sahuagin have long since absconded with these ships' treasures. If the PCs decide to search any of these older wrecks, you can improvise encounters with marine creatures as desired.

S1. Main Deck

The main deck is empty apart from a few fish swimming lazily about. Even the coils of rope and other deck accessories that clutter most ships are missing. A light dusting of sediment covers everything, but is not thick enough to conceal even a small object. Double doors set into the side of the afterdeck hang open, swinging slightly in the current. Two open hatches lead down below.

S2. Afterdeck

This raised area at the stern of the ship is stripped of ropes and other loose equipment. A wooden railing runs around the deck, and on both corners is an empty metal mounting, apparently for a weapon that has been removed.

The ship's wheel is still intact, but close inspection reveals that the chains connecting it to the rudder have been broken. Characters who investigate the broken chains find several triangular teeth tangled in the chains near where they were once attached to the rudder. A successful Knowledge (nature) check identifies the teeth as having come from an enormous great white shark. Fortunately for the PCs, this shark is not currently in the area, but the possibility of such a monstrous creature in the vicinity should give them pause.

S3. Upper Companionway

This room is little more than a passage, giving access to the cabin doors and a stairway that leads down below. The doors to both cabins hang open on their hinges.

S4. Captain's Cabin

This large cabin shows only a few traces of its former luxury. The walls are handsomely paneled up to about waist-height, and above that level they are painted with nautical scenes. Fragments of gilding remain in a few places on the carved ceiling-beams, but for the most part they have been hacked off. The windows have been broken out to leave a single large opening in the back wall, and a large bunk and an overturned table are the only furnishings that remain here. The eastern wall contains a large, lacquered map of the surrounding seas.

Although the sahuagin have looted this room of most of its valuables, they did not discover the hidden **Treasure** behind the lacquered map on the east wall. A successful Search check (DC 20) made in the general area of the map finds a cleverly hidden catch that allows the heavy central section to slide down and reveal a small hollow in the wall beyond.

Treasure: Hidden in the hollow behind the map are three leather pouches. Each contains 50 gp. Behind the pouches are several *potions of water breathing*. You should tailor the number of potions found here to your group—there should be one potion per PC. Each potion functions at caster level 5, so a single potion lasts for 10 hours. If the PCs waste their time in the wreck, they may find the underwater portion of the sahuagin hideout to be even more dangerous.

S5. Officers' Cabin

Two pairs of bunks are fixed to the walls and floor here. The mattresses have been torn from the bunks and ripped apart, apparently in the course of being searched. Fragments of cloth and straw float all around the cabin. Both windows are broken out.

S6. Lower Companionway

This narrow hallway has no windows, and a single stairway leads upward. A cupboard has been built into the underside of the stairs. The door to the cupboard has been ripped off its hinges and lies on the deck nearby. The cupboard itself is empty.

S7. Gun Deck (EL 1)

This open deck is dominated by two banks of cannons, some of which have broken free of their mounts and now lie on their sides. Upturned barrels and cannon balls lie strewn haphazardly across the deck itself. Numerous empty hammocks hang from beams and the masts as well; apparently the bulk of the crew slept here.

NOTE: If your campaign does not include firearms or cannons, simply replace these banks of cannons with ballistas.

Retrieving the cannons for salvage is a difficult task likely beyond the means of a 1st-level party. The barrels contain gunpowder for the cannons, but unfortunately all of it is soaked and useless—even if it is dried out, it burns only reluctantly.

Captain Fletcher is here, floating near a cannon in the aft port corner that has torn free from its mounting. He turns around with a start when the first PCs enter the hold.

"Oh, there ye be," Captain Fletcher says, his voice strangely unaffected by being underwater. He glances forlornly about the hold and seems to sigh. "Looks like they stripped'er clean. They even took the bodies o'me crew. Well...most o'the crew..." As his voice trails off, he glances back down to the cannon beside him with a forlorn look in his eyes.

At Captain Fletcher's ghostly feet, crushed under the cannon that rolled onto him, is his body. The sahuagin have stripped it of its valuables, and the crabs and eels have been at what remains. Captain Fletcher recovers himself quickly, though, and addresses the PCs again.

"Listen," he says. "I know we only agreed upon th'gem, but what d'ya say to recoverin' me mortal remains and takin' th'bones back to Freeport? Th'blasted cannon pinned me down, so at least them scaly buggers didn't get me bones, but they done took me sword n'kit. Still, seems I'm good an' dead, all right. You kin' keep all me effects if ye kin'git 'em back from them whats took 'em, as long as ye see to'it me bones git a decent burial. I may have lived me life on th'briny deep, but I've no wish to lie under it ferever and be fish food."

This adventure assumes that the PCs agree to return Captain Fletcher's body to Freeport for burial. The cannon itself weighs 2,500 pounds; up to four people can work together to lift it enough to drag Fletcher's body out. Characters can use rope to aid in this effort; a successful Use Rope check (DC 20) allows any number of people to assist in moving the cannon (to a maximum of one person per 5 feet of rope), as long as the rope itself is strong enough. The rope listed in the *Player's Handbook* is nowhere near strong enough, but enough strong rope can be found in area S8 to serve this purpose. Of course, lifting the cannon isn't the only way to get Fletcher's body; the deck around and below the cannon can be damaged enough so the cannon falls through to the hold, freeing the body in the process. Gruesome characters could even simply chop through the body's legs and salvage what they can, although this act distresses Captain Fletcher greatly.

If the PCs refuse, Captain Fletcher haunts and annoys the PCs as detailed earlier. In any case, he accompanies the PCs from this point on in their adventure, providing little support in combat but offering plenty of opinions and observations along the way.

Creature: A few small harmless fish swim around inside the gun deck. Additionally, an octopus has taken up residence inside the barrel of the gun that has pinned Captain Fletcher's body to the deck. The octopus won't attack unless it is cornered (by someone searching its home or attempting to move the cannon, for example), and tries to escape if it suffers any damage.

➤ **Octopus:** hp 14; *Monster Manual* 276.

S8. Equipment Locker

The walls of this room are lined with shelves and cupboards. Many are smashed and ruined, and all of them are empty. All that remains are several large coils of rope stacked in a corner, along with a spare anchor.

The sahuagin took everything and anything of remote value from this room, but left the rope and anchor since they were too heavy and useless to them. The rope itself has been treated to resist water and remains strong; it could be used to assist in moving the cannon off of Captain Fletcher's body. There is a total of 200 feet of strong rope here; the rope weighs 100 pounds per 50 feet.

S9. Gunpowder Storage

This storage area contains several barrels, many of which are upturned. A thick layer of gray sediment lies on the floor here.

This is where the majority of the ship's gunpowder was stored. Like the gunpowder in area S7, this powder has all been ruined by the seawater. If you have replaced the cannons in area S7 with ballistas, this room is instead used to store ammunition for the ballistas.

S10. Hold (EL 2)

The *Stingray*'s hold is in the bilges of the ship; it hasn't a proper deck. Cargo was apparently stowed between the ship's beams. Four large holes in the ship's hull attest to its doom. The splinters around their edges are angled upward and inward. The cargo itself is missing, but in its place lie the bloated, ruined bodies of nearly a half-dozen dead pirates.

The dead found here represent only about a quarter of the *Stingray's* crew; the rest were taken by the sahuagin for food. The remaining bodies attracted several scavengers initially, but they have since been driven off by the arrival of the Creatures.

A character that examines the holes in the ship's hull and makes a successful Search check (DC 15) finds several large shark teeth that match those that may have been found in area S2 above.

Creatures: A pair of lacedons (aquatic ghouls) have taken up residence in the hold recently. If Captain Fletcher sees these undead feasting on his crew, he cries out in rage and grief and attacks the lacedons as best he can. He exhorts the PCs to help him kill the creatures.

➤ **Lacedons (2):** hp 16, 19; *Monster Manual* 119.

Development: All four of the holes in the hull are large enough to allow Medium creatures easy access to the sea floor. When the sahuagin left the ship after gathering bodies and loot, they left via these holes. They

were fairly overburdened with treasure, though, and they dropped a fair amount of it as they relocated to their hideout under the nearby island. A successful Search check (DC 20) uncovers a fair amount of pirate equipment (hats, daggers, rapiers, bits of clothing, and even a hook-hand) partially buried in the sediment directly below and around these holes in the *Stingray's* hull.

The Sahuagin Hideout

Mother Merrow and her sahuagin minions have established their base in a cave system beneath the nearby volcanic island. Originally a network of lava tubes left behind by an ancient eruption, the caves have been further expanded by erosion and serve the sahuagin quite well.

A trail of dropped loot leads across the sea bed toward the nearest cliff face of the nameless island. A character can follow this trail with a successful Survival check (DC 15). If none of the PCs discover this trail or possesses the Track feat, they can still tell with a successful Search check (DC 20) of the sea floor near the wreck that the majority of the dropped loot seems to point in the direction of the island. Captain Fletcher points this out eventually if the PCs don't figure it out.

Characters who insist on sifting through the sediment for dropped loot can make a Search check (DC 20) once per minute. Success yields 1d6 gp worth of loot, usually in the form of silver coins, cheap jewelry, or small weapons. No more than 25 gp total in loot can be scavenged in this manner, and if the PCs take more than a couple minutes here Captain Fletcher grows impatient and urges them onward.

There are two ways to enter the underground (and in places, underwater) hideout. An above-ground entrance to the caves is hidden among the rocks on the island's southern coastline; a successful Search check (DC 25) locates this cleverly hidden entrance. A second entrance is located underwater on the southeast face of the isle; this entrance is larger and more obvious to anyone who approaches, as long as they are underwater. Noticing the entrance from above the water requires a successful Search check (DC 20). Both entrances are indicated on the map of the wreck site. Characters who successfully follow the trail of loot from the *Stingray* are led directly to the underwater entrance.

The tunnels of the sea caves are ovoid in cross-section, with height of about 8 to 10 feet. The chambers themselves have domed 20-foot-high ceilings.

H1. Guardians of the Land Entrance (EL 2)

The narrow, damp tunnel opens here into a fairly roomy chamber with a sandy floor and moss-covered walls.

Creatures: The cave is guarded by four zombies, created by Mother Merrow from some of the better-preserved pirate corpses and a *wand of animate dead* she looted from a prior shipwreck.

➤ **Pirate Zombies (4):** hp 16, 14, 11, 11; *Monster Manual* 266 (human commoner zombie).

H2. Main Cave (EL 1)

This large cave reeks of brine and seaweed left to dry slowly on the shore. Half of the chamber is filled with sloshing sea-water, while the other half consists of a sandy beach strewn with seaweed. A partially flooded tunnel leads to the north, and to the south a half-flooded natural archway opens into another cavern.

This area is where the bulk of the sahuagin stay when they aren't out raiding and scavenging. They spend much of their time in the water, which is about 20 feet deep. The tunnel leading to the east from this area is completely underwater.

Creatures: Fortunately for the PCs, the majority of the sahuagin that lurk in these caves are out to sea, raiding ships and locathah villages. Only a single sahuagin is here at this time. The creature returned recently from a raid with news for Mother Merrow that the rest of the sahuagin plan to be gone for at least another week. The sahuagin remains in the pool if it sees the PCs enter this area, preferring to fight in the water. If discovered, it attempts to flee to area H5 to warn Mother Merrow of the intrusion.

➤ **Sahuagin (1):** hp 14; *Monster Manual* 217.

Development: At high tide, water fills the western portion of this cave to a depth of three feet. At low tide, the pool in the eastern half of the room is only 15 feet deep.

H3. Shrine to Sekolah (EL 2)

This small cave is partially flooded; the only obvious exit is a half-flooded archway to the north that opens into a larger cavern. A sea chest sits on a natural table of rock to the west, draped with seaweed and supporting a large pile of humanoid skulls. Mixed in with the stack of skulls are several small glittering objects. The wall behind it is crudely carved with pictures of sharks.

This chamber is a small shrine to Sekolah, the god of the sahuagin and other evil aquatic races. The water-filled portion of the chamber is 20 feet deep, and the passageway leading to the northeast is completely submerged.

Creature: A solitary sahuagin cleric named Srathulas tends this shrine while the actual high-priest of the cult is gone; currently, the high-priest is accompanying the rest of the sahuagin on a raiding party far to the south. Srathulas takes her position quite seriously, and becomes enraged if any non-sahuagin dare to enter the shrine. She attacks at once, neglecting to call for help or alert the rest of the complex in her anger.

Srathulas, Female Sahuagin Clr1: CR 2; Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic); HD 3d8+3; hp 16; Init +1; Speed 30 ft., swim 60 ft.; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk +5 melee (1d8+3, masterwork trident); Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+3, masterwork trident) and +2 melee (1d4+1, bite); SA blood frenzy, rake 1d4+1, spells; SQ blindsense 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., freshwater sensitivity, light blindness, speak with sharks, water dependent; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills: Craft (sculpture) +4, Concentration +3, Handle Animal +4 (+8 with sharks), Hide +6 (+10 underwater), Listen +8 (+12 underwater), Spot +8 (+12 underwater), Swim +10.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting.

Languages: Common, Aquan, Sahuagin.

Spells Prepared (3/2+1; base save DC = 11 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *guidance*; 1st—*cause fear, cure light wounds, obscuring mist*.

Possessions: Masterwork trident, black coral pendant in the shape of a shark (holy symbol of Sekolah) worth 5 gp.

Treasure: The glittering objects on the sea-chest altar consist of the latest sacrifices to Sekolah. The majority of these sacrifices are stolen loot from the *Stingray*. This loot consists of 100 gp, a small garnet worth 50 gp, six gold teeth worth 5 gp each, a bronze ring worth 25 gp, a gold bracelet worth 125 gp, and a belt woven from fine gold wire worth 500 gp.

Development: At high tide, water fills the western portion of this cave to a depth of 3 feet; the sea-chest altar remains dry. At low tide, the pool in the eastern half of the room is only 15 feet deep.

H4. Dumping Grounds

This chamber reeks of dead things washed up on the seashore. Heaps of bones, most stripped clean of flesh and some still wearing tatters of clothing or rusted armor, lie heaped on the floor in small piles. Intermixed with the bones are dozens of miscellaneous nautical tools; gaff hooks, broken sextants, pieces of metal and wood, ship nameplates, and more. Hundreds of pale crabs skitter over the floor, plucking morsels from bones where they find them.

This is where the sahuagin dump the remains of their feasts after they sink ships. They also dump all the loot that turns out to be worthless; all the good loot is eventually taken to a sahuagin tribe deeper underwater. Choice loot is given to Mother Merrow. In any case, there is little of worth here.

H5. Mother Merrow's Quarters (EL 3)

This cavern is completely submerged underwater, yet it is richly furnished with the spoils of several raids; a lavishly-carved ship figurehead depicting a mermaid leans against the northern wall, and two large sea-chests sit to either side of it. The floor is strewn with coins of all denominations, while to the east several niches in the walls are stuffed with jewelry, exquisitely crafted weapons, silverware, statuettes, and other expensive looking plunder.

Creature: This is where Mother Merrow, the leader of this group of sahuagin raiders, spends much of her time. She normally doesn't go on raids, preferring to

lounge here and wait for her minions to bring her more treasures.

Mother Merrow is a malenti; a rare form of sahuagin that looks outwardly like an aquatic elf. The only things that belie her true nature are her dead black eyes and her shark-like teeth. She dresses in an assortment of looted finery including a satin ball gown embroidered with pearls and gold thread, and various pieces of jewelry. The ball gown has long ago been ruined by sea water and hangs in tatters, but the pearls and gold thread are still quite valuable.

Mother Merrow, Female Sahuagin Malenti Ill2: CR 3; Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic); HD 2d8+2d4+12; hp 25; Init +2; Speed 30 ft., swim 60 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +3; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d4+2, +1 dagger); SA blood frenzy, spells; SQ blindsense 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., freshwater sensitivity, light blindness, speak with sharks, water dependent; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills: Concentration +8, Handle Animal +8 (+12 with sharks), Hide +7 (+11 underwater), Listen +8 (+12 underwater), Ride +9, Spellcraft +8, Spot +11 (+15 underwater), Swim +9.

Feats: Alertness (as long as Skithis is within arm's reach), Animal Affinity, Great Fortitude, Scribe Scroll[B].

Languages: Common, Aquan, Elven, Sahuagin.

Spells Prepared (4/3; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*acid splash, detect magic, ghost sound, mage hand*; 1—*cause fear, color spray, mage armor.*

Mother Merrow's prohibited schools are enchantment and evocation.

Spellbook: 0—all; 1st—*animate rope, cause fear, color spray, identify, mage armor, silent image.*

Possessions: +1 *dagger, wand of animate dead* (3 charges remaining), rotted ball gown (pearls and gold thread are worth 50 gp), gold bracelet set with gems worth 150 gp, tarnished silver tiara worth 75 gp, pearl earrings worth 25 gp each, jade pendant worth 35 gp, and the Eye of the Sea Dragon. This last is in fact a spherical ruby worth 1,500 gp.

Skithis, Dogshark Familiar: CR —; Tiny animal (aquatic); HD 4 (effective); hp 12; Init +2; Speed swim 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 14; flat-footed 14; Base Atk +0; Grp −11; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d4−3, bite); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA —; SQ blindsense, empathic link, improved evasion, keen scent, low-light vision, master gains a +3 bonus on Spot checks; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 4, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills: Concentration +5, Handle Animal +1, Hide +7, Listen +6, Ride +7, Spellcraft +3, Spot +6, Swim +10 (dogsharks use their Dexterity modifier for Swim checks).

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Finesse[B].

Tactics: Mother Merrow's first action in combat is to take a round to telepathically summon the shark in area H6; the shark swims to aid the malenti immediately, arriving in area H5 in 1d3 rounds. Mother Merrow fights with her spells, resorting to her dagger only once her combat spells are exhausted.

If she receives advance warning of the PCs' intrusion into the caves, she calls the shark to her side and casts *mage armor* on herself.

Treasure: Most of the best loot from the various ships the sahuagin have raided has ended up in this room. None of it is hidden, but if the PCs can't breathe water it may take some time for them to haul it all out to dry land.

The coins on the ground are mostly copper and silver, but there are a few gold and even some platinum coins to be found as well. In all, there is 12,365 cp, 1,742 sp, 421 gp, and 16 pp. The mermaid figurehead is worth 500 gp and weighs 100 lbs.

The niches in the walls contain dozens of items, about half of which are masterwork rapiers, daggers, and other swashbuckling weapons. The total value of these objects is 2,500 gp. One of the gems therein is in fact a *pearl of power* (1st-level spell). Captain Fletcher's *+1 rapier* is here as well; he is happy to have it back, but after a moment's thought he gives it to the PCs as thanks.

H6. Cave Entrance (EL 1)

A small cave entrance lies nestled between submerged rocks of the island's cliffside here.

The sahuagin believe their hideout to be secluded enough that they have little fear of intrusions; they post no sahuagin here as a result. The entrance is far from unguarded, though.

Creatures: A blue shark swims lazily through the water here, commanded to guard the entrance to the caves against intrusion by any non-sahuagin.

Blue Shark: hp 18; *Monster Manual* 279 (Medium shark).

To Freeport

The players may think that now they've recovered the Eye of the Sea Dragon, their troubles are over. In fact, trouble seems to be drawn to the Sea Dragon's Eye like sharks to blood in the water.

The journey to the city of Freeport can be as long or short as you wish; this is both an excellent point for you to give the PCs a chance to rest and recover from the first part of this adventure as well as a good time to have them encounter further perils of the open sea of your own devising. You can award experience points during this journey; the PCs may have earned enough to gain a level from their exploits so far. Eventually the PCs reach Freeport, and the second half of this adventure begins.

At last, the party's ship reaches Freeport. The following may be read aloud to the players as their characters enter the harbor.

You gather along the ship's rail to get your first look at Freeport. After all the stories of the notorious pirate city, it seems smaller than you expected, but you can see from the variety of ships at anchor that its reputation for being a place where anything goes is well deserved. A tall, elegant elven clipper is docked just yards from a squat and deadly-looking orc privateer, and as your ship gets closer to the dockside, you can see members of almost every race you have ever heard of among the sailors and stevedores going about their business.

"A brave sight it be, aye?" You try not to jump as Captain Fletcher materializes beside you. He heaves a deep sigh, and wipes a tear away with one lace cuff.

"I never thought to see Freeport again," he says, "but here we be, safe and sound. Now all that be left t'do is to convey the gem to th'Pirate God's temple...along with me bones, of course, and our association be ended. I shall go to my much-deserved rest, while ye, me good mates, go on to lead happy and prosperous lives. Perhaps at the last, which, I trust, be many years hence, we shall meet again, and tip back some fine grog together o'er the great adventure we have shared.

Captain Fletcher turns his attention to the city. "See yon building, far to the larboard end o'the piers there?" he continues. "That be the left-hand side to ye lubbers. That grand establishment be the Last Resort, said ta be the finest lodgings in Freeport. You forgive me fer saying that ye look a bit rougher than th'usual mugs they get, but with the riches ye've gained on this voyage I reckon' ye could live there fer a month. Away on the starboard be Scurvytown, and well named it be, at that, where I've toasted the spoils and drunk away th'-sorrows o'many a daring exploit. Perhaps when ye've the time ye'll visit th'Chumhouse. There it be, on the end o'th'pier there, an'drink t'th'fond memory of old Ned Fletcher. Have a care fer yer valuables there, though, for it draws all manner o's-curvy bilge rat to its teat.

"And that be Freeport in a bottle, mates. Merchants with thar wealth at th'one end, and rogues with thar daggers at th'other. Them walls in the middle be the Old City, where the Captain's Council be, and well-placed they are, halfway between merchants and cut-throats.

"Now, the temple o'the God o'Pirates be in th'Temple District, as ye might expect, and that be behind th'Merchant District. See the Last Resort, that grand hotel I pointed out t'ye? Starting from there, ye goes more or less nor'east through the Merchant District, wit'all its big, fancy houses, for a little under half'a mile. Ye'll be able t'tell when ye comes t'th'Temple District. The Temple o' th'God

o'Pirates be about th'first one ye'll come to that way. Easy enough to spot, it be, for it'll have the Jolly Rodger a'grinnin' down above it. I'll meet ye there. Best I don't go wit'ye through the city. A gentleman in me condition might draw unwelcome attention."

The journey from the waterfront to the Temple of the God of Pirates is simple enough, and the PCs should be able to find it easily enough following Captain Fletcher's directions. If they get lost, anyone they meet can direct them to the temple, for it is a well-known landmark. Further details on the city of Freeport should be ad-libbed as necessary. *Freeport: The City of Adventure* contains a wealth of information about the city.

The Temple of the God *of* Pirates

While it is not the largest building in the Temple District, the Temple of the God of Pirates is certainly imposing. It is a large circular building with a domed apse at one end. A raised wooden walkway leads to the entrance, looking very like a small pier or jetty. Inside, beneath the dome, the main temple is a large circular space, set out with pews made of rowers' benches from a variety of ships. Opposite the entrance is a raised area where the priest and his acolytes conduct services. A raised podium with a ship's wheel mounted on it serves as a pulpit.

True to his word, Captain Fletcher is waiting for the PCs to bring the Eye of the Sea Dragon. He stands next to a heavily-built man with an earring and a peg leg; this is the Temple's high priest, Peg-Leg Peligro (male human Clr 12).

Father Peg-Leg still hasn't quite recovered from the shock of seeing his old friend Ned Fletcher as a ghost, but he does his best to maintain his composure as Captain Fletcher introduces the PCs to him. Father Peg-Leg asks the PCs to come with him to the rear of the temple, where he unlocks the hidden trapdoor that leads to the treasury. An austere subterranean chamber lit by a wall of *continual flame* obscured by a stained-glass window, the treasury holds an impressive amount of booty; the piles of gold and gems have been donated by devout pirates and honest seafarers in the hopes that pirates would not attack them. In the center of the treasury stands a large bronze statue of a dragon turtle, with gilded teeth and claws. One of its eyes is a perfect match for the Sea Dragon's Eye rescued from Mother Merrow's clutches; the other socket is empty.

Father Peg-Leg asks the PCs for the Sea Dragon's Eye; if they refuse to hand it over he has no problem killing the PCs and then using *speak with dead* to interrogate their bodies. Captain Fletcher heaves a sigh of relief as Father Peg-Leg carefully places the gem into its socket. Father Peg-Leg then ushers the PCs and Captain Fletcher out of the secret room below the temple and back into the main room, and Captain Fletcher makes ready his goodbye speech.

"Mates," Captain Fletcher says, "It seems our business be safely concluded, and I expect I am not much longer fer this world. Mere words, I reckon, be inadequate t'express me gratitude, so I shall be content to let the gold and treasure ye recovered from the *Stingray*'s cargo say me thanks fer me. Father Peg-Leg, I commend these gallant souls t'ye, for they have been true..."

Captain Fletcher's farewell speech is cut off by a tremendous crash from somewhere below the temple. Father Peg-Leg hurriedly unlocks the door and throws it open. The air inside the chamber below is full of dust, but it is just possible to make out a large hole in the wall where the statue once stood. The Sea Dragon's statue has toppled over on its side. It is also clear that both of the Sea Dragon's Eyes are now missing. Before the PCs or Father Peg-Leg can approach, the hole in the wall vanishes.

Captain Fletcher drops to his knees with a wail of despair.

The Sea Dragon's eyes have been stolen by cultists of an ancient, unspeakable deity. The cultists have been planning to incorporate the two gems into a sacrifice to the Unspeakable One, both as a gift of monetary value and as a symbolic act of superiority over the Pirate God. They knew Captain Fletcher had set out to collect the missing eye, and laid plans to steal both once he returned. The leader of these cultists, a human sorcerer named Mordekai, discovered that only 5 feet of rock separated the vault below the Pirate God's temple and a nearby sewer. He commissioned a scroll of *passwall* from a wizard on the mainland, and then he and his cultists waited for the opportune moment to strike. When Captain Fletcher didn't return as planned, Mordekai grew impatient. Finally, he sought out one of the higher-level clerics in his hidden cult for advice. This cleric performed a *divination* and learned that the Sea Dragon's Eye was indeed soon returning to Freeport but in the hands of a different group. Heartened by this, Mordekai stationed a few cultists on rotating watches near the temple, and when one saw the PCs arrive and greeted by Fletcher's ghost, the cultists sprang into action. Mordekai and a few minions used the scroll of *passwall* (after a few false starts) to invade the vault. Unfortunately, the *passwall* opened up directly behind the dragon turtle statue and detached a key mount, causing the statue to crash to the ground. Mordekai grabbed the gems and ran, dismissing the *passwall* just as the PCs and Father Peg-Leg clambered into the room.

A Vision of Lost Eyes

The PCs can try to search for a secret door where the tunnel entrance was, but they'll find nothing. A successful Spellcraft check (DC 25) made by a character that saw the hole recognizes it as a *passwall* spell. Canny characters might ask Captain Fletcher to move through the wall to follow the thieves, but this final affront has unhinged his sanity and all he does is stand in the middle of the Temple, wailing and cursing, until the Sea Dragon's Eyes are returned.

Understandably, Father Peg-Leg would like the gems recovered, if only to get rid of Captain Fletcher's ghost. He asks the PCs to help him return

the statue to its upright position, and then casts a *divination* spell before it. He puts a candle in each of the statue's now-empty eyesockets as he casts the spell, and as he does, the jaws of the dragon turtle open slightly. A cloud of mist pours out, forming a cloud in front of the statue. The mist quickly coalesces into a hazy image. Father Peg-Leg is shocked by this development, realizing that the Pirate God is about to grant him and the PCs a vision.

As you watch, the mist pouring from the statue's mouth forms recognizable shapes. You see a vision of a damp chamber with a low stone altar in the center. Several figures dressed in hooded robes stand in a ring around the altar, chanting in some guttural language. Glinting on the altar are the Sea Dragon's Eyes. The air above the altar wavers, and something takes form: a hideous, unnatural shape like nothing you have ever seen. You cannot bear to look at it, but you cannot tear your eyes away.

Just when you think you can bear no more of this terrible sight, the vision moves away from the blasphemous underground temple, floating upward into a warehouse and out through the roof. A sign hangs over the warehouse door—a ship's anchor surrounded by four gold pieces.

With this, the mist fades. Father Peg-Leg gasps as it does, and exclaims that he recognizes the warehouse. He can give directions to the warehouse to the PCs, but cannot go with them to retrieve the stolen gems. He must remain at the temple to make sure Captain Fletcher's ghost doesn't cause any problems with the other worshipers who may come to visit.

The Hidden Shrine

The warehouse from the vision is one of a cluster of small buildings close to the eastern end of the Docks. The sign hanging outside is identical to the one in the vision, but there is nothing else remarkable about it. The warehouse has no windows, and the only way in is through the double doors at the front. Everything seems quiet from the street.

The warehouse is a cover for a secret temple of the forbidden cult of the Unspeakable One, a terrible chaotic evil deity worshiped by the insane.

U1. Front Doors (EL 1)

The front doors to the warehouse are quite heavy looking, and wide enough to admit a cart.

Trap: The doors are not kept locked, but they are trapped. When one of the doors is opened, a canvas bag filled with sea urchins swings down from the ceiling on a rope, aimed at the middle of the doorway. The cultists stationed inside the warehouse unhook the trap when their allies want in, but since they're currently expecting someone to come looking for the stolen Sea Dragon's Eyes, the trap is ready to go.

Sea Urchin Bag Trap: CR 1; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; Atk +12 melee (2d6, sea urchin bag); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20.

U2. Warehouse Interior (EL 3)

The interior of the warehouse is strangely empty. Several barrels and crates lie stacked tightly together at seemingly random points throughout the room, and the place is lit by several oil lanterns affixed to posts and the walls.

Since this warehouse is a front, it isn't used to store anything of note; the barrels and crates have been placed to give the cultists strategic points to defend the entrance to their underground shrine to the Unspeakable One. Nevertheless, miscellaneous nautical supplies fill each crate and barrel, on the off chance that the cultists are forced to "prove" that there's nothing sinister going on here.

Creatures: Three cultists wait in here, ready to defend the warehouse from intrusion by anyone who comes looking for the stolen Sea Dragon's Eyes. The cultists aren't particularly attentive, though, and if the trap in area U1 doesn't alert them they'll have to make Listen checks to hear the PCs' entry.

Two warriors lurk behind the two stacks of barrels in the middle of the room, and a junior cult priest lurks behind the crates to the southwest. Although the cult priest is an adept and is high enough level to summon a familiar, he has not taken the time to do so yet.

Cultist Thug, Male Human War1 (2): CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d8+1; hp 6, 5; Init +0; Speed 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d6+1/19–20, short sword) or +1 ranged (1d6/×3, shortbow); SA —; SQ —; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will –1; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +7, Hide +2, Intimidate +3, Move Silently +2, Swim +7.

Feats: Athletic, Stealthy.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Shortbow, short sword, leather armor, 2d6 sp each.

Cult Priest, Male Human Adp3: CR 2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 3d6; hp 14; Init +1; Speed 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d4+1, masterwork dagger); SA spells; SD —; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +6, Hide +2, Move Silently +2, Spellcraft +6.

Feats: Combat Casting, Stealthy, Toughness.

Languages: Common.

Spells Prepared (3/3; base DC = 11 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, ghost sound* (2); 1st—*cause fear* (2), *cure light wounds*.

Possessions: Robes, masterwork dagger, 3d6 sp.

Tactics: The two warriors take advantage of the cover afforded by the barrels to shoot arrows at anyone who tries to enter the warehouse, resorting to melee as soon as anyone gets further than half-way into the building. The adept uses *ghost sound* to try to distract player characters toward the northeast and southeast corners of the room and *cause fear* on anyone who comes within range. All three fight fanatically to the death rather than retreat below and possibly unveil the location of the secret entrance to the shrine.

U3. Hidden Shrine Entrance (EL 2)

This crate is cleverly designed to look like it's simply another crate, but in fact it's a hidden trap door that tilts back to reveal a hole in the floor with a ladder leading down. A successful Search check (DC 20) uncovers the ruse. A character with the Track feat who makes a successful Survival check (DC 15) notes signs of heavy foot traffic leading to this crate as well.

Creature: A quasit named Turgle perches invisibly atop this crate. Turgle volunteered his services to the cult months ago after his previous master met with an "accident" at sea.

Turgle, Male Quasit: hp 16, *Monster Manual* 46.

Tactics: A coward at heart, Turgle does not take part in the ambush in area U2. If the PCs find the entrance, Turgle waits for them to climb down, then attacks the last character in line while he is on the ladder. His next action is to fly away and turn invisible, after which he continues to harass the PCs with hit and run tactics.

U4. Entrance to the Hidden Shrine

This small chamber is dimly lit with guttering lamps affixed to the walls. Several piles of rope lie heaped to the north. The walls of the room are lined with wooden timbers that serve to support the ceiling.

The piles of rope are used to bind kidnapped victims; close inspection reveals bloodstains on them.

Assuming the PCs made their way to this location fairly quickly after the Sea Dragon's Eyes were stolen, Mordekai is currently leading the cultists of the Unspeakable One in a loud ritual of chanting and wailing, preparing for the sacrifice. The base chance to hear the chanting with a Listen check is DC –10, but remember to account for distance when the PCs make Listen checks. If no PC says they're making a Listen check, you can assume they're "taking 0" on the check to determine if they hear the chanting.

U5. Mordekai's Chambers

This side chamber contains a comfortable-looking bed, a desk on which a single lantern burns, a shelf of books and papers, and a small footlocker.

Of all the cultists, only Mordekai actually lives here. The other cultists all have other lives they pursue during non-worship hours, and live in other places in the city.

Mordekai carries all of his personal wealth with him. The footlocker is used to store clothing and food. The books and scrolls on the shelves are mostly focused on obscure evil religious tracts and methods of sacrifice and torture.

Treasure: A successful Search check (DC 15) turns up a scroll written in Abyssal, entitled "The Way of the Unspeakable One." This scroll briefly outlines the main beliefs of those who follow the Unspeakable One, a chaotic evil deity dedicated to madness and destruction. The scroll is worth 100 gp to a collector.

U6. Storage Cave

This small cavern is filled nearly to capacity with crates, boxes, barrels, containers, and piles of clothes and miscellaneous equipment.

The cultists use this cave to store assorted items used by the cultists or taken from their victims. Near the entrance to the room stands a wide cabinet, inside of which are five mustard-yellow robes. Stealthy PCs could use these robes to disguise themselves as cultists. Wearing a robe grants a +2 circumstance bonus on Disguise checks against the cultists.

Treasure: A successful Search of the room (DC 20) takes twenty minutes, but success turns up several assorted pieces of cheap jewelry worth a combined total of 2d10+20 gp.

U7. Unspeakable Temple (EL 5)

This large cavern is well lit by dozens of sputtering incense burners that hang from the wooden beams that support the ceiling or the numerous support pillars in the room or along the walls. The air is thick and hazy with the foul-smelling yellow smoke these burners belch forth. A large flat rock dominates the center of the room, its surface painted yellow and stained with blood.

This cavern is the same one the PCs and Father Peg-Leg saw in the vision granted by the Pirate God. Assuming that the characters wasted little time tracking down the stolen gems, they find this room filled with nearly a dozen cultists in mustard-yellow hooded robes. The two Eyes of the Sea Dragon lay on the altar stone itself, which is ringed by robed cultists. Mordekai stands at the altar, leading the chant.

Creatures: Although the number of cultists in this room could easily overwhelm a party of 1st-level characters, they are currently enthralled by the combination of the narcotic incense smoke and the chant that Mordekai is leading. As a result, the cultists have a –10 penalty on Listen and Spot checks.

- **Cultist Thugs (10):** hp 5 each, see area U2.
- **Mordekai, Cult Leader, Male Human Sor 4:** CR 4; Medium humanoid (human); HD 4d4+4; hp 13; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk +4 melee (1d4+2, *+1 dagger*); SA spells; SQ —; AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 8, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +12, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +5, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (local) +5, Spellcraft +9.

Feats: Combat Casting, Persuasive, Spell Focus (conjuration).

Languages: Common, Abyssal, Infernal.

Spells Known (6/7/4; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*acid splash*, daze, detect magic, mending, read magic, touch of fatigue*; 1—*comprehend languages, grease*, summon monster I**; 2—*summon monster II**.

*Conjuration spell; base save DC = 14 + spell level.

Possessions: +1 dagger, bracers of armor +1, robes, 45 gp.

Mordekai has not bothered summoning a familiar.

Development: When the PCs arrive in this room, Mordekai is already well into the ritual of sacrifice to the Unspeakable One. A successful Knowledge (arcana or religion) check (DC 15) allows a character to realize that the ritual is designed to call forth some form of creature to collect the Eyes of the Sea Dragon as a sacrifice.

If the PCs take no action, the cultists finish the ritual in three rounds, at which point the Unspeakable One sends an emissary to collect the sacrifice (see The Sacrifice, below).

If the PCs attack, the cultists react sluggishly, and suffer a –4 penalty to initiative checks, attack rolls, and Reflex saving throws for four rounds. As long as Mordekai is able to continue concentrating on the sacrifice, though, the ritual is completed. If he takes damage, he must make a Concentration check (DC 10 + the damage taken) to continue the ritual. If Mordekai is successfully grappled, paralyzed, killed, or otherwise kept from speaking and moving, the ritual fails automatically. If the ritual fails, the emissary from the Unspeakable One arrives, but its actions upon arrival are much different.

The Sacrifice (EL 5+)

If Mordekai is prevented from completing the sacrifice or not, the Unspeakable One hears and sends a minion to collect. The air above the stone altar shimmers and undulates, and the smoke in the room slithers into the center and solidifies into a horrible shape.

Creature: The minion of the Unspeakable One is a creature known as a fihyr, a fleshy personification of fear and terror. A fihyr appears as a sphere of eyes and mouths that walks on a set of large tentacles. The

fihyr lands squarely upon the stone altar, and immediately begins to collect the sacrifices...unfortunately, the Unspeakable One has no interest in wealth, and has sent the fihyr to collect living sacrifices.

Fihyr: CR 3; Small Aberration; HD 4d8; hp 23; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp –3; Atk/Full Atk +2 melee (1d4–2, bite); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA frightful presence; SQ darkvision 60 ft., spell resistance 10, vulnerable to sunlight; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 7, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Frightful Presence (Ex): Any creature that witnesses the fihyr attacking becomes panicked if it fails a Will save (DC 10).

Vulnerable to Sunlight (Ex): A fihyr dies instantly when exposed to sunlight. Magical sunlight can destroy it as well if the spell penetrates the fihyr's spell resistance, though if the fihyr succeeds at any allowed saving throw, it avoids the instant death effect.

Skills: Hide +11, Move Silently +7, Spot +4.

Feats: Stealthy, Skill Focus (Spot).

Tactics: The fihyr's tactics depend on if the sacrifice ritual is completed or interrupted. If it's completed, Mordekai realizes that the fihyr has no interest in the Eyes of the Sea Dragon, and directs it to attack the PCs. In this case, the cultists also attack the PCs, although they still suffer the –4 penalties as detailed above. Mordekai does not suffer this penalty.

If the ritual was interrupted, the fihyr arrives and ignores Mordekai's wishes, and immediately begins attacking him and anyone else in reach.

Note that the cultists and Mordekai can be equally affected by the fihyr's frightful presence.

This final battle can be quite devastating to a group of 1st-level PCs, but if they play their cards right (by interrupting the ceremony) they can turn their enemies on one another.

Treasure: Both Eyes of the Sea Dragon lie on the altar; the fihyr has no interest in them and does not try to take them.

Ending the Adventure

When the PCs return the two Eyes of the Sea Dragon to the Temple of the Pirate God, Father Peg-Leg puts them back into the statue. At the same time, Captain Fletcher recovers from his despair. As his transparent form ripples and begins to fade, the PCs hear his parting words:

> "Me thanks t'ye, mates. May ye always have calm seas and a following wind. Perhaps we'll meet again in the next world..."

With that, he is gone, passed on to his final rest at last.

By the end of this adventure, the PCs should be of a suitable level to begin the award-winning Freeport trilogy, starting with *Death in Freeport*. This adventure begins with a press gang attack at the Docks, and can take place whenever the DM wishes.

Freeport: City of Adventure includes descriptions of many colorful locations and personalities in this notorious pirate city, many of them accompanied by adventure hooks.

If Mother Merrow survived, she could be developed into a long-running nemesis. Even if she was killed, the remaining sahuagin raiders could figure out who slew her and track down the PCs for revenge.

The cultists of the Unspeakable One are clearly active in Freeport, and if any escaped they also seek revenge on the PCs. Certainly, senior cult members might come to Freeport to find out what happened, and they might start hunting the PCs. Or perhaps there are more groups of cultists already in the city, who must be hunted down and destroyed before they summon something more powerful than a fihyr and cause a catastrophe.

Freeport Resources

To date, Green Ronin Publishing has produced eight Freeport products.

The Freeport Trilogy: These adventures (*Death in Freeport*, *Terror in Freeport*, and *Madness in Freeport*) kicked off the Freeport series. *Death in Freeport*, the first-ever d20 System product, has been out of print for some time, but a 3.5 revision should be available as a PDF by the time you read this.

Hell in Freeport: This challenging adventure for levels 10–12 takes the PCs where they belong: Hell. It works well with *Legions of Hell* or the new *Book of Fiends*, also from Green Ronin.

Freeport: The City of Adventure: The definitive Freeport sourcebook, this hardback is your starting point for urban adventure. It includes a fold-out color map of the city by Todd Gamble.

Denizens of Freeport: Need an NPC on short notice? *Denizens of Freeport* can help. It has dozens of fully-statted NPCs, each with backgrounds, personalities, and adventure hooks.

Tales of Freeport: This collection of adventures is by Graeme Davis, the author of "Dead Man's Quest." It also includes some additional locations, prestige classes, and other rules material.

Black Sails Over Freeport: The latest Freeport book, and the first published with 3.5 rules, *Black Sails* is a 256-page mega-adventure for characters of levels 6+. It's been designed to stand alone, and makes a good entry point to Freeport-style adventuring for those looking for a truly epic campaign.

Scaling the Adventure

"Dead Man's Quest" is designed for a group of four 1st-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 2nd- or 3rd-level PCs, or even 4th- or 5th level PCs.

2nd–3rd-Level Characters

Pirates!: The insane pirates have no nonlethal damage and fight in a more coordinated manner; make them all 2nd-level warriors or 1st-level fighters.

The Stingray: Advance the octopus to a 6 HD octopus, and add 1–2 more lacedons to the hold.

Sahuagin Hideout: Add two pirate zombies to area **H1**, one or two sahuagin to areas **H2** and **H3**, and replace the blue with a tiger shark (Large shark). Advance Srathulas to a 2nd- or 3rd-level cleric, and Mother Merrow to a 3rd- or 4th-level illusionist.

Unspeakable One's Shrine: Advance all cultist thugs to 2nd- or 3rd-level warriors, the cult priest to a 4th- or 5th-level adept, and Mordekai to a 5th- or 6th-level sorcerer. Replace the fihyr with a gibbering mouther.

4th–5th-Level Characters

Pirates!: Change the pirates into 2nd-level fighters and remove their nonlethal damage.

The Stingray: Remove the potions of water breathing from the Captain's Cabin, change the octopus into an aquatic gray ooze, and replace the lacedon with 3 ghast lacedons.

Sahuagin Hideout: Replace the pirate zombies with sahuagin zombies. Add 2–3 sahuagin to areas **H3** and **H4**. Advance Srathulas to a 4th- or 5th-level cleric, and Mother Merrow to a 5th- or 6th-level illusionist. Replace the blue shark with a great white shark (Huge shark).

Unspeakable One's Shrine: Change all cultist thugs to 3rd- or 4th-level rogues, the cult priest to a 4th- or 5th-level cleric, and advance Mordekai to a 7th- or 8th-level sorcerer. Replace the fihyr with a chaos beast.

MONSTER HUNTING THE DEPARTMENT-7 WAY

DEPARTMENT-7 FIELD MANUAL 001-34:

INVESTIGATING SHADOW EXPRESSIONS

BY RICH REDMAN
DIAGRAMS BY CHRIS TREVAS

This manual for field operatives of Department-7 covers general procedures and information for investigating incidents related to Shadow expressions.

The *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting* tells us that Department-7 is a private institution that recruits talented individuals who are not only aware of the rise of Shadow, but are willing to act for the common good of both mundane and magical beings. It asks its operatives to investigate new expressions of Shadow, manage and maintain relationships between the mundane world and various enclaves of Shadowkind, and to deal with violent or destructive creatures of Shadow (or to protect benevolent creatures of Shadow from hostile mundanes).

In other words, Department-7 is well aware of Shadow, and has been for some time. Over that time, it has compiled standard procedures into a manual it distributes to its recruits. This article covers the high points of that manual.

INTRODUCTION TO FIELD MANUAL 001-34

SHADOW

We at Department-7 know little about Shadow. It seems to be a barrier that keeps different realities from intruding on each other. As such, it is not so much a wall as it is a trackless wilderness. At some times and in some places, that wilderness narrows and creatures stumble from the far side into our mundane world. It's unclear whether an increase in ambient magic potential causes the narrowing or is caused by it. Creatures of Shadow reach our world with what they carry and only the most superficial memories of their lives.

TRAVELING SHADOW

Very little can be said of traveling through Shadow, since the act of doing so has a catastrophic effect on memory. This "Gift of Lethe" grants knowledge of the local language and allows the traveler to retain personal memories like name, relationships, closely held beliefs, and personal experiences. The traveler loses all memories of the world at large, however. At best, new arrivals have blurred, confused memories of how they entered Shadow.

In one sense, Shadow behaves like a one-way portal. So far, no one from the mundane world has managed to enter Shadow, much less travel through it. However, the mere fact that people have tried indicates that, somewhere, there is an ability to predict the waves of Shadow.

TERMINOLOGY

Department-7 frowns on the use of the word "monster." When making reports, agents should avoid using it. The problem stems from its lack of specificity. A mass murderer or a pedophile may be human and still be a monster, while a Shadow creature may be a shopkeeper, surgeon, or philanthropist. Agents should remember that Shadow might not leave or take anything, but might instead change what already exists. Most of us have laughed at bad horror movies where no one notices the creepy castle on the hill until after bad things start happening, but Shadow can cause buildings like that to appear or reshape terrain.

Until you identify your target, use the word "subject." Once you identify the subject, use its specific species name. Names of Shadow species can be found in the third edition of *Ashe's Field Guide* (available from the Fraternal Order of Vigilance) or *Dr. Allison's Guide to the Mystic Arts* (available from the Institute for Continuous Education). While Department-7 does not support, or subsidize membership in, either organization, both can be sources of useful information. Seasoned agents will, of course, recognize many species from their own experience, and will develop their own sources of information within Shadow communities.

GENERAL PROCEDURE

When Department-7 asks you to investigate, it's because something happened. If you are tracking down a lead you developed on your own, most likely it's because something happened that got your attention. You may know little beyond what the media reports of the event or events, but these procedures will help guide your investigations.

Do not assume that Shadow caused the event. As we explained under Terminology, humanity has its own supply of "monsters," and you should always be open to the possibility that Shadow creatures are the victims rather than the perpetrators. You may find yourself defending a creature you consider hideous, either in combat or by apprehending the actual perpetrator.

SECRECY AND DISCRETION

Department-7 is a private agency with no special standing in the law enforcement community. Employment by Department-7 is not a license to kill or otherwise break the law. Use discretion and common sense.

It is a founding principle of Department-7 that the general public is not ready to know the truth about the world around them, particularly since most people cannot perceive it. Do not try to convince the Shadow-blind that strange creatures exist and do not talk about strange events or Shadow creatures in public. Do not talk to the media. Keep your work in the very shadows you investigate.

IDENTIFY AN EVENT

Some day we may wake up to GNN headlines about dragons and gang warfare between tribes of goblins. Until then you must train yourself to recognize

when a media story somehow involves Shadowkind or a Shadow expression. Useful clues include:

Disappearances: When a large number of people disappear from the same area within a very short time (a few hours or less), Shadow may have taken them.

Homicides: It's very difficult to separate the work of some more sinister Shadowkind from that of serial killers. Shadowkind, unlike serial killers, are generally not tormented by guilt and generally have no desire to be caught. Bodies with parts missing, ritualistic murders, and cases where police refuse to discuss any details with the media could be signs of Shadow creatures at work. The more you learn about the arcane arts, the more you can recognize murders committed as part of a real ritual.

Media Blackouts: Department-7 believes that world governments know more about Shadow than the general public. If the media reports a phenomenon or a disturbance but cannot report further because of a government-mandated media blackout, there may be a Shadow expression.

Strange and Unusual: You can see Shadow for what it really is. You may spot Shadow creatures in photographs or videotape that others identify as birds, animals, or unusual human beings. While others may rationalize a sudden change in local terrain or the overnight appearance of medieval structures, you recognize them as being caused by Shadow. Watch for the strange and unusual.

Unidentified Diseases: Outbreaks of unidentified diseases may have mundane causes, or they may be the media's explanation for a rampage by breathstealers or vampires.

Unprovoked Riots and other civil disturbances: Most events have provocation or rational cause such as racial tension, political actions, or legal decisions. When such things happen for no reason, Shadow may be behind it.

Violent Insanity: Individuals that abruptly become violent, attacking friends and families, may be possessed or tormented by Shadow creatures they cannot see. Alternately, the accused individual may have developed the ability to see Shadow for what it really is, and lost control.

LOCATE

However you become aware of an event, your first task is to locate the cause of that event (the subject). Department-7 recommends using a mixture of the following methods:

Look: Remember that you can see Shadow creatures for what they really are. A living dumpster, for example, is far more obvious to you than to the Shadow-blind mundanes. Go to the scenes where events took place, and look around. Use your senses.

Ask: Obviously you cannot go up to passersby and say "Excuse me, did you see a troll in size 24 Nikes and baggy jeans run by here?" You can, however, use media reports to get a description of what people did see, and use that to ask questions. See Research for tips on interviewing.

Track: Many agents possess tracking skills useful even in urban areas. Things to look for include:

Displacement: When something is moved from its original position, it leaves signs. Footprints displace soil. A car parked during rain leaves a dry space when moved away. Other examples include bits of cloth or hairs left on fences, brush, or rough surfaces; wild animals or birds flushed from their usual habitat; cleared trails through vegetation; overturned rocks or leaves; torn spider webs; and insects repairing damage to their nests or scurrying for new hiding places.

Fig. 1: Displacement

Staining: The best example of staining is blood from an open wound. Tracking mud or water and crushed berries or other vegetation are other examples of staining.

Fig. 2: Staining

Weathering: Weather affects objects exposed to it, obviously. Trackers need to look for lack of weathering, which may indicate that an object was recently moved. For example, if fallen leaves are dry though the surrounding vegetation is damp, something recently turned the leaves over. The same is true for rocks with clumps of earth clinging to them (recently turned over) and for branches (light-colored wood may indicate a recent break).

Fig. 3: Weathering

Littering: While some Shadow creatures, like illithids, are highly disciplined, many are not. They may leave a trail of violence, broken or stolen objects, gum wrappers, fruit rinds, cigarette or cigar butts, and so forth.

Fig. 4: Littering

OBSERVE

There are two forms of observation, indirect and direct.

Indirect observation of a subject involves looking at places where you know the subject has been. The first step in indirect observation is securing the scene. Check the area to make sure the subject is no longer present. If a victim is present, it does no good to care for the victim if a violent subject is still active in the area! Once the area is secure, provide

assistance to victims and call for medical support. Touch as little as possible while going through these initial steps. Have a teammate photograph the scene while the rest of the team clears and secures it. This preserves the scene if it is necessary to open doors, tear cloth for makeshift bandages, or otherwise alter the setting.

Once the area is secure, read the scene. Determine what actually happened. Question witnesses, look for signs indicating how the subject entered and left the area, and analyze the injuries of any victims. Remember that some Shadow creatures generate more of their kind by killing victims. Someone you thought was dead may rise up to attack you, and that's information you can use. If the scene is a mess and entry was forced, the subject may be strong, undisciplined, or in a hurry. If the scene is neat and entry was stealthy, the subject may be intelligent and disciplined, and may have spent time gathering information about the scene before acting.

A useful format to use when recording information is OCOKA.

Observation: Look at the scene from outside and determine the exterior locations from which the scene can be observed. Look for windows, rooftops, doorways, basements, alleys, sewer grates, and other points from which the subject could have seen what happened. Note that this process may force you to re-evaluate reports from witnesses, since they may not have been able to see the scene from their vantage point.

Cover and concealment: While these are vital survival tools if hostile forces surprise you at the scene, what you're looking for at this point is where the subject could have concealed itself. This may help you determine your subject's size, but may also indicate the subject's skill at hiding or its powers of illusion.

Obstacles: Note any obstacles to movement and check them for evidence that the subject collided with them. Lack of evidence indicates either that the subject is familiar with the area (and may live nearby) or that the subject has above-average reflexes.

Key features: These vary with the scene and include anything significant not covered by the other points.

Avenues of approach and withdrawal: Look for all possible ways in or out. If you had to rappel down into a hole to reach the scene, the subject either did the same or flew. Either gives you more information. This analysis also directs your attempts to search out tracks left by your subject.

Direct analysis means watching the subject, but also includes interacting with the subject. Department-7 has found that the survival odds for agents increase with the amount of time spent observing subjects before engaging them. However, the department also understands that sometimes you're going to walk around a corner, see a subject for what it really is, be seen by the subject, and be forced to defend yourself. See Engage below.

A useful tool for making sure you get all the information you can from direct observation is SALUTE.

S	SIZE
A	ACTIVITY
L	LOCATION
U	UNIT or UNIFORM
T	TIME
E	EQUIPMENT

Size: This includes both the size of individuals and the number of individuals. Take the time to count things like beds, motorcycles, car seating, and other indications that there may be more subjects than you currently see.

Activity: Note what the subject does, what it avoids doing, places it goes, places it avoids, and so forth. This more than anything else can give you vital information about the subject's weaknesses.

Location: Observe the details of the subject's location, particularly if that location is some sort of nest or home base. Make sure you can find that location again.

Unit or uniform: Most Shadowkind possess no internal hierarchy or organization. However, creatures such as yuan-ti can act in cohesive groups. Badges, patches, clothing items or colors, and tattoos may all provide clues to allegiances.

Time: The time and date when the subject is active may also provide you vital information. Subjects active at night or in dark places are often sensitive to bright lights, for example. Some sub-

jects, such as lycanthropes, are active only at certain times of the month or year.

Equipment: Not all Shadow creatures are intelligent. You can estimate intelligence by observing equipment use. Do not neglect the obvious reasons to observe this facet of your subject: if the subject uses firearms, you want to know before engaging. If the subject uses body armor, you want to know that as well.

The Exception: If the subject poses an immediate threat to life (Shadow or mundane), stop observing and act. Do what it takes to eliminate that threat. Note that you can eliminate the threat by removing the victim or by driving off the subject. Use lethal force at this stage only if unavoidable. Killing the subject eliminates the chance to learn if it is a small part of a bigger problem!

REPORT AND RESEARCH

It's important to pass on information you gain to Department-7. Not only can the department provide you with the benefits of other agents' information gathering, it gives us a place to start in the tragic event of your death. Use OCOKA and SALUTE to get information to us through your usual channels of communication. Be sure to flag urgent reports, and provide a plan of action with a timetable. If you must act immediately, it's unlikely we can respond before you act and our resources are better devoted, in such cases, to teams with longer timelines.

Research online, in specialist libraries, in the folklore collections of universities, in media archives, and in private collections provides you with vital additional information. Don't learn lessons the hard way about your subject when you can learn from the successes, and failures, of others. Many inexperienced agents report by cell phone while observing their subjects and then engage. Most don't survive the experience, because they skipped the research that would have told them their subject's weaknesses.

You may, in addition, wish to conduct research by interviewing witnesses. Besides the obvious problem that most will be Shadow-blind, memory is a fallible record of events. Witnesses can help you locate the causes of events, however, so here are some tips to follow:

Review: Before approaching a witness, review the facts you have.

Set Goals: For each interview, decide if your goal is interpretation, confession, or (most likely) information.

Be Quiet: First let the witness tell the story in his or her own words. Don't interrupt.

Observe: Watch for "tells," signs the witness is lying or making things up. Scratching, twitching, shifting, and rapid breathing are common tells. Looking to the left sometimes indicates "creating" or lying, while looking to the right sometimes indicates remembering.

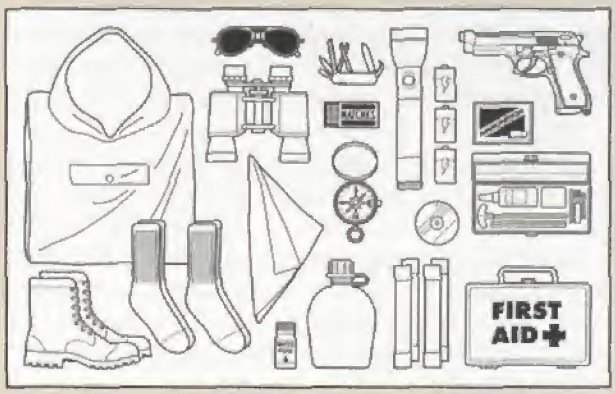
Inject Stress: Increase the pressure on the witness at your discretion by reviewing the story, step by step. Mix relevant and irrelevant questions. Take the witness through the story out of chronological sequence. Compare the witness' story to the facts.

The Exception: As with observation, the exception to withdrawing to report and research is immediate threat to life. Do what it takes to eliminate that threat.

EQUIP

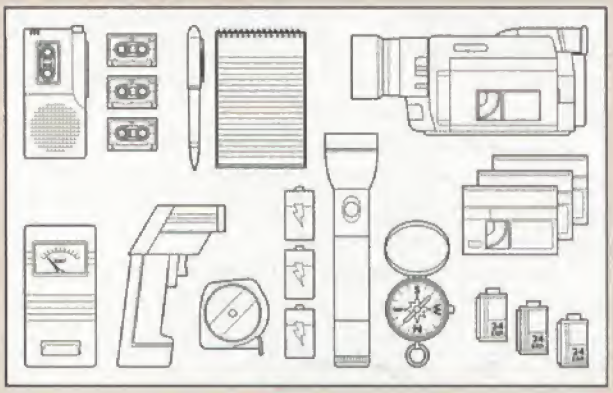
Observation, reports, and research should identify what your subject is in general, and give you useful information about specific individuals. Department-7 provides several equipment packages, or kits, to teams of agents who demonstrate the necessity or obvious application of the kit in their reports. Kits include:

Escape Kit: Every Department-7 agent fears the day that some Shadow cabal targets him or her. We recommend that every agent have a kit like this in a secure location away from his or her residence. The kit includes a backpack, hiking boots (we strongly recommend you break these in before you need them), two pairs of socks, a 1-quart wide-mouthed bottle, water purification tablets, wind- and waterproof matches, bandanna, a compass, standard flashlight, extra batteries, poncho, small signaling mirror, sleeping bag, sunglasses, first-aid kit, Swiss Army knife or multipurpose tool, knife, binoculars, spare handgun, ammunition for that handgun, firearm cleaning kit, machete, and signal flares. In addition, you should add a map of the area in which you intend to hide. Some agents also like to add a search-and-rescue kit to this equipment at their own expense.

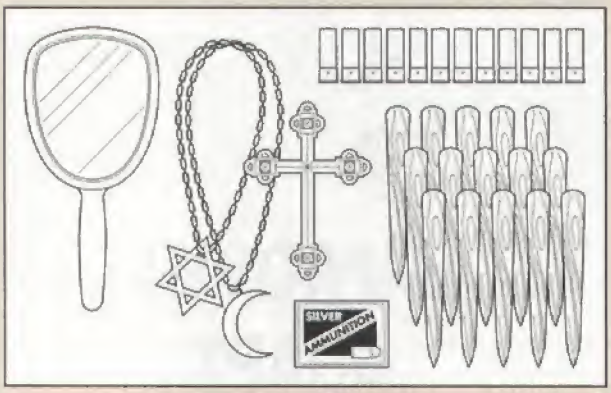


Hauntings Kit: This kit is appropriate when evidence suggests the presence of incorporeal spirits. This kit includes: Notebook and pen, extra batter-

ies, flashlight, measuring tape, extra recording media (audio tapes, video tapes, camera film), basic electrical toolkit for on-site equipment repair, camera (usually 35mm), sketch pad and colored pencils (for diagrams), motion detectors, video camera, audio recorders, digital thermal scanner (also called an infrared non-contact thermometer, used to detect "cold spots"), EMF (electro-magnetic frequency) meter, several tripods for mounting cameras and microphones, and a compass (compass needles are reputed to deflect in the presence of ghostly "energy fields"). The kit comes in an oversized range bag.



Vampire Kit: This kit includes mirrors, a selection of holy symbols (not limited to a silver crescent moon, a Star of David, a cross), UV flashlights, 100 silver bullets (specify handgun caliber when requesting this kit), a dozen 12-gauge dragon shells (agents must supply their own shotguns), and 20 wooden stakes. The kit comes in a standard range bag. Few agents ever have to face vampires, so detailed information on these creatures is somewhat scarce. Some agents prefer to augment this kit with metal or metal link collars to prevent neck bites and mirrored sunglasses to avoid direct eye contact, but Department-7 has no firm evidence these items are effective and does not include them.



ENGAGE

After all your locating, observing, reporting, and research, it's time to engage your subject. The quick planning tool for covering the highlights of the engagement is METT-T.

Mission: No matter how obvious it seems, make sure that you and everyone on your team agree on what you're going to do, whether it's negotiate, capture, or kill. Make sure your contact at Department-7 agrees with you.

Equipment: Make sure you have what you need, and that it works.

Time: You must act in a timely fashion, and only you know what that means. If there is imminent danger to life, you must act to prevent it. If no such threat exists, you still must act before your subject becomes aware of your presence or moves to a new hiding place.

Terrain and weather: It is always desirable to lure your subject to a location with which you are familiar and the subject is not. It is least desirable to engage a subject on terrain with which it is familiar and you are not. Weather factors are also important. If your subject is nocturnal, engage it during the day and in bright sunlight (even if you have to break a few windows or punch holes in walls to bring the sunlight in). If your subject is active during the day, engage at night using night-vision equipment. Take full advantage of your surroundings. Look for improvised weapons. Look for sources of flame, electricity, or extreme cold and use those effects to which your subject is vulnerable. Look for sources of cover or concealment (or both) because they can save your life. If your subject has sensitive hearing, set off a car alarm. Be resourceful.

Troops: Have enough people to get the job done. Make sure they agree on the mission and have the equipment they need. Get them where you need them. Remember that even mundanes have their uses. If you're in trouble, make noise so witnesses call for police, fire, or medical support. Use your cell phone!

Warning: Department-7 does not condone property damage. Avoid damaging public or private property wherever possible. Remember that law enforcement usually doesn't see Shadow the way you do, and Department-7 has no special standing with law enforcement agencies. If you commit crimes, you will suffer for them.

TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

These tips are contributed, reviewed, and updated periodically by experienced agents.

Be afraid: Fear sharpens the reflexes, but don't let adrenaline take over. Learn the signs of adrenaline flooding your system because you may be unconsciously aware of threats your conscious mind hasn't perceived. A few deep, regular breaths can help control your fear response.

Be fast: Time is not on your side. The longer a confrontation takes, the more chance the subject has to trick you or use some strange ability and the more likely law enforcement will arrive. When you act, act decisively and swiftly.

Be suspicious: Don't let on that you're suspicious, but listen to your instincts. Be open to the idea that things aren't what they seem.

Better to have it and not need it than need it and not have it: You can't carry everything. You're not strong enough and you can't always drive to where you need to use your gear. Make a careful estimate of the situation, pack things you know you need, then add things you *might* need until you reach the upper limit of what you can carry for extended periods.

Don't bunch up: Modern weapons mean that a group of people is a single target for an explosive or an automatic weapon. Keep a few yards between you when at all possible.

Don't give up: The most important tool for survival in any situation is willpower, and get used to the idea that your work will often come down to a struggle for survival against other mundanes, Shadow creatures, and even the elements. Take another step, take another shot, and stick to it.

First the horse, then the saddle, then the man: An old cavalry maxim, this translates into our context as take care of those who can't care for themselves, take care of your equipment, then take care of yourself.

Keep moving: Don't stand still. Don't fire more than twice from the same place. A stationary target is asking for a grenade, a fireball, or some other catastrophe.

Loot the bodies: As callous as this sounds, the truth is that fallen or captured opponents may have tools or weapons you need to defend yourself, and they may have documents that can advance your investigation. Be quick, because you've probably attracted unwanted attention, but don't forget this step either.

Never go into a place if you don't have a way out: While many places have obvious exits, many places we go in the course of investigations don't. Be wary of entering a dark room if you don't know there's a window or other exit.

Plan: The ability to improvise can make the difference between life and death. Too much planning can mire you in details and trying to anticipate millions of possible events. You must find a middle ground. Success is always a combination of planning and improvisation.

Relax: Keep your breathing deep and regular.

Stay alert: Be aware of what's happening around you. While our society considers it rude not to pay attention to the person with whom we're speaking, you need to keep looking around.

Stick together: With all the advantages provided by modern communications, it's easy to let your team become separated. The moment communications stop working, retreat to a previously agreed-upon point and regroup. Stay within a few seconds of each other and stay in communication.

Train constantly: When your world goes all pear-shaped, you will not regret a single moment of physical training, weapons training, and course work. Keep your body and mind ready.

Use your environment: Inexperienced agents assume their environment is something to which they must react. Experienced agents know that the environment is theirs to use. Move tables or flip them over, use wheeled objects as mobile cover and concealment. Turn the lights off (or on). Use your METT-T analysis (see Engage, above) to your advantage.

Watch the feet: Even if you can see all your subject's hands, watch its feet and its center of balance. Shifting weight may be followed by a kick. Turning the body may conceal a sucker punch.

Watch the hands: Everyone knows Han Solo really shot first. If you can't see all of a person's hands (and some Shadow creatures have more than two), assume it has a weapon.

AFTER WORD

Department-7 operatives have taken this manual into the field with them, and not all of them came back. We can only assume that their manuals fell into the hands of their mundane or Shadow opponents. That means the opponents you face may know what the manual tells you to do. Don't let standard procedures replace clear thinking! If you're not in a standard situation, standard procedures can't apply. Improvise, adapt, and stay alive.

IMPROVISE
ADAPT
STAY ALIVE

GM Notes

"It's a perfect night for mystery and horror. The air itself is filled with monsters."

–*Bride of Frankenstein*, 1935

The following notes are for the GM, to help her understand Shadow and make decisions that shape her campaign. Where the preceding article is written as something the heroes might read, what follows focuses on the rules behind the experience.

Shadow

"I thought it was just the two of us that had the shine to us. Just like you probably thought you was the only one. But there are other folks, though mostly they don't know it, or don't believe it."

–*The Shining*, 1980

In terms from *Manual of the Planes*, Shadow is a soft border between planes. It forms a buffer zone that belongs to both planes yet has an identity and planar traits of its own. Magic crosses the zone into planes on each side, but the border is usually so wide that magic effects end before reaching the other side. Soft borders normally exist where there is similar terrain on both sides, but the effect of Shadow on memory makes it impossible to determine if this is true.

The border shifts, like waves at the shore. When a wave of Shadow rolls in, it displays effects as described in the Introduction of the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*. When it recedes, it leaves items and creatures marooned in the mundane world.

Predicting Shadow

"You know all my life, I have been waiting for an adventure. I thought it would never happen to me. I mean adventures are for soldiers, or for bullfighters, the men women fall in love with. Now, here I am! Paintings are moving and strange voices are calling for me at night, and all it cost me was five gallons of gas!"

–*The Haunting*, 1999

Good *Urban Arcana* candidates for the predictive ability include the Beloved, the Commission for Research into Unexplained Phenomena (C.R.U.P.), Department-7, Draco Industries, the Fellowship, the Infinite Serpents, the Institute for Continuous Education, the Knightly Order of St. Bartholomew, and Markova Enterprises International.

Making Your Own Shadow

"Do you know why you're afraid when you're alone? I do."

–*The Sixth Sense*, 1999

Clearly defining the causes, effects, and timing of Shadow is purposely left indefinite. Future *Urban Arcana* products may gradually clarify those things, but for now impose your own choices on the indefinite nature of Shadow and make your campaign unique.

The Introduction to the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting* has a section titled Making *Urban Arcana* Your Own, and you should read it carefully. Here are some additional considerations:

How long has Shadow been around? The *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting* says that the present "Age of Shadow" is not the first, that the tide of Shadow rises and falls every few centuries. What it doesn't say is how old the current rising tide is. The description of Anastasia Markova in Chapter Six: Organizations mentions that she passed through Shadow early in the 20th Century, but she may be an anomaly. In your campaign, the current tide might date back to July 1947, with a first manifestation in Roswell, New Mexico; or a month earlier when Kenneth Arnold saw nine crescent-shaped objects flying over the Cascade Mountains in Washington state. Or perhaps the tide began rising a decade or more earlier, because of or causing Nazi research into the occult.

What records remain of the last appearance of Shadow? In the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*, the head of Draco Industries, Franz Draco, is an efreet who lived in the mundane world through the rise and fall of several Ages of Shadow. He is clearly in a position to take advantage of the current rise, since he knows what to expect from the phenomenon. The Fellowship is an organization dedicated to maintaining records of Shadow expressions as well.

What happens during periods of low Shadow? The description of Franz Draco says that he fell into a deep torpor when magic waned. Wynnefalshond, founder of the Knights of the Silver Dragon, seems to have been unaffected by the rise and fall of Shadow. It's important to remember that magic increases during times of rising Shadow, regardless of which causes the other. So in times of low Shadow, particularly magical creatures such as aberrations, dragons, elementals, fey, and outsiders, lose most of what makes them what they are and fall into times of deep slumber. Sentient plants lapse back into being simple plants. Constructs appear to be elaborate statues. Undead become simply dead. Magical beasts lose most of their intelligence and become animals. Giants and monstrous humanoids remain almost unchanged. Magic rituals and spells lose their efficacy, and magic items become mundane. At least, until Shadow rises again...

Who knows about Shadow and how are they regarded? Chapter Six: Organizations in the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting* contains several mundane organizations that know about Shadow, including the Fellowship and the Fraternal Order of Vigilance. In your campaign, such individuals and organizations may be thought of as cranks, or as the first line of defense against an inexplicable and unstoppable invasion. Decide whether Shadow is secret or public knowledge.

Is there one world beyond Shadow, or many? It's possible to assume that there is one world on the other side of Shadow from the mundane world, perhaps one of the fantasy campaign worlds produced by Wizards of the Coast (after all, the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting* includes the Church of

Pelor, St. Cuthbert's House, and the Sons of Tyranny). The ancient rivalry between drow and yuan-ti is part of *Urban Arcana* according to the description of Anastasia Markova, so clearly those two races have a long shared history. It's equally possible to assume a more elaborate and diverse cosmology, with multiple worlds or planes and creatures encountering each other for the first time in the mundane world.

How many are there? The main reason why Shadow creatures conceal themselves is fear of humans. The more Shadow creatures there are, the less they need to fear humans.

What superstitions work? The vampires portrayed in Chapter Eight: Friends and Foes of *d20 Modern* have a lot of weaknesses largely based on Hollywood's portrayal of vampires, and on Bram Stoker's novel, *Dracula*. Your vampires, for example, may have more weaknesses, or fewer. Whenever you're using monsters from folklore, myth, or literature, consider carefully the differences between the old stories and contemporary depictions.

How does Shadow affect abilities? Mundane, ordinary, characters can see Shadow creatures, but don't see anything unusual. The standard rules assume that this has no effect on monster abilities. Meeting a beautiful woman's eyes will still turn you to stone if she's really a medusa, for example. However, it was always a design consideration for both *Shadow Chasers* and *Urban Arcana* that being able to see Shadow, the way heroes can, was both a blessing and a curse. It's very much in keeping with many works of horror to rule that what you can "see" notices, and doesn't like you. So fear auras, gaze attacks, and other abilities could only affect people who can see Shadow. Be careful that you also put liabilities on not being able to see, like not knowing what the others are fighting.

General Procedures

"A person is smart. People are dumb, panicky animals."

–*Men in Black*, 1997

The key rule associated with heroes that specify using the general procedures is the GM's Best Friend (Chapter Seven: Gamemastering in *d20 Modern*): A +2 circumstance bonus to a related d20 roll. Your defense against players abusing this privilege is in the after word: General procedures are no substitute for thought. If players always cite a general procedure, or worse yet always cite the same general procedure, it won't always be appropriate. You control that +2 circumstance bonus and nothing in this article changes that!

Seasoned players may try to use the bonus to metagame or as a sort of "radar." For example, if heroes believe they're looking for a grendelspawn hunter, they may grill you about footprints, odd smells, and acid burns. If you give them a +2 circumstance bonus, they know they're on the right track. If you deny them that bonus, they know they're on the wrong track. An alternative to denying the bonus is modifying the situation. Using the same example, you know that the real villain is an urban wendigo. Rather than denying the +2 bonus to your heroes, instead tell them that the scene is a busy place with lots of footprints, including bare feet, and that the recent events happened in a heavy rainstorm that would have washed away the acid spit of a grendelspawn.

Some players will enjoy props such as blank report forms they have to fill out for Department-7. Others will want to roleplay delivering verbal reports. Still others will be bored by reports and want the opportunity to say, "we report," and get on with the game. Know your group and don't force them to report in a way they won't enjoy, but do enforce the need to report in order to requisition equipment for the current investigation.

Encounters

"'Get her!' That was your whole plan. I like it; it was scientific."

–*Ghostbusters*, 1984

Encounters in *Urban Arcana* should differ from those in most *Dungeons & Dragons* games, and GMs should take that into account. In D&D, heroes search out or stumble upon opponents, and then beat the life out of them. Using that approach in *Urban Arcana* is likely to get heroes killed. While many creatures are similar to their D&D counterparts, Shadow changes others, making each one unique and giving it specific weaknesses (fiends, for example). When possible, plan encounters so that a little thought allows heroes to observe the villains, withdraw, and do some research. If players want to skip that and get right to the combat, let them. It's their campaign too and they may think kicking the door down and killing bad guys is the fun way to play. When they do take the time to think things out and find opportunities to observe, withdraw, and research, the rules in Chapter Two: Skills and Chapter Eight: Friends and Foes give you guidelines on what information to provide. If they choose to ignore that information, they can always roll up new characters...

Equipment

"Let's keep this simple. If you've got your boots on, you can march into combat."

–*Heartbreak Ridge*, 1986

The requisition system provided in Chapter Four: Equipment of *d20 Modern* is how heroes acquire the kits described in FM 100-34. Purchase DCs for kits and any rules for additional equipment appear below.

Dragon shells: This shell effectively turns any shotgun into a low-powered flamethrower. When fired, the shotgun shoots a five-foot wide, 20-foot long line of flame that deals 2d6 points of fire damage (Reflex save, DC 15, for half) to all creatures and objects in its path. No attack roll is required. Any creature or object that takes damage from a dragon shell risks catching on fire (see the *d20 Modern* rulebook, Chapter 7, Catching on Fire). Dragon shells lack sufficient firepower to operate semiautomatic or automatic shotguns. Such weapons must be operated manually to chamber the next shell (this reduces their rate of fire to single shot). Furthermore, any weapon that fires a

dragon shell becomes unreliable (no longer functions the next time the player rolls a natural 1 on an attack roll with that weapon) until it receives 30 minutes of special maintenance. 20 shells are Purchase DC 12 items separately and have a Military (+3) restriction.

Escape Kit: Purchase DC 27, provides a +2 equipment bonus on Survival checks.

Fiend Hunter's Kit: Details of this kit appear in the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting* and are not repeated in this article. The kit is available through Department-7 and you should make sure your players know it's available to their heroes.

Hauntings Kit: Purchase DC 26. This kit is not a substitute for an evidence kit. When used in conjunction with such a kit, the haunting kit provides a +2 expertise bonus on Investigate checks related to spirits, ghosts, and other incorporeal creatures.

Mirrored Sunglasses: These provide a +2 equipment bonus to the Reflex saving throw to avoid gaze attacks.

Neck armor: This has no additional effect in the game.

Silver bullets: Price and effect of this ammunition appears in the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*.

UV Flashlights: These light sources emit ultraviolet light, not visible to the naked eye. The flashlights in this kit are standard flashlights, but penlight and battery-operated floodlight versions also exist. If a hero chooses to use a UV flashlight to make an attack, everything vulnerable to the effects of daylight in the 30-foot long, 15-foot wide cone illuminated by the flashlight must succeed at a Reflex saving throw (DC 15) or be affected as per their individual descriptions (a vampire takes 2d6 points of damage immediately, and if exposed for a full round must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude saving throw or be consumed by fire and destroyed utterly). UV flashlights are purchased as normal flashlights with the Purchase DC increased by +2.

Vampire Kit: Purchase DC 20. This kit is primarily for fighting vampires once the heroes locate them. The equipment has the following effects:

Wooden stakes: These hard wooden items are simple weapons that deal 1d4 points of piercing damage. They can be thrown (range increment 10 feet) and are simple weapons. Purchase DC 8, no restriction.

Equipment Table

Item	Purchase DC	Restriction
12-gauge dragon shells	12	Military (+3)
Escape kit	26	Licensed (+1)
Hauntings kit	26	—
Mirrored sunglasses	7	—
UV flashlights	+2	—
Vampire kit	20	Military (+3)
Wooden stakes	8	—

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Source material and inspiration for this article were obviously drawn from the *d20 Modern* rulebook and the *Urban Arcana Campaign Setting*. In addition, the following were also useful:

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